THE

DRAPER'S DAUGHTER.

A Tale of Paris

IN

THE OLDEN TIME.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

ELIE BERTHET,

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PREFACE.

This translation of a French Tale, describing Parisian scenes and habits of a remote period, was commenced without the intention of placing it before the public. I am emboldened, however, at the completion of my attempt, to give it "a chance", by the reflection that its pages will present nothing offensive to the religious feelings, or injurious to the morals of "any gentle reader", who may favour them with a perusal.

F. T. P.

December 19, 1851.

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CHAPTER I.

NOTHING can less resemble our fashionable modern commercial repositories, than the gloomy and damp shops to which the Parisians resorted two centuries ago for the luxuries or necessaries of life. At this primitive period, when Parisian industry had not commenced its rise, if it even existed — that is, during the minority of Louis the Thirteenth — there was in the old *Rue de la Tixeranderie*, at no great distance from the *Hotel de Ville*, a well-frequented shop, of which a succinct description will serve to convey a sufficiently correct idea of what then constituted the dwelling of a trader of reputation.

The *Rue de la Tixeranderie*, even of the present day, is neither spacious, clean, nor airy. We may judge of its condition in an age when the cleanliness and health of the city was almost totally abandoned to the caprice of its inhabitants individually. Ill paved and miry, it constituted in all seasons one of those frightful sinks, of which the noxious exhalations rendered a residence in Paris so dangerous.

The house of which we are treating was situated towards the centre of the street, a little higher up than

the *Rue du Coq*, between two other buildings, of which one intruded about a foot upon the thoroughfare, whilst the other receded as much. Moreover, this dwelling, like its neighbouring ones, had the particular form which distinguished the habitations of the citizens in the middle ages. Its gable was turned towards the side of the street; the first story projected; and the front allowed a view of the cross-beams which formed the woodwork. The roof was surmounted with gutter spouts and fanciful figures in lead, which, in rainy weather, liberally dispensed absolute torrents upon the passengers.

To protect themselves and their merchandize from these frequent inundations, the traders were then accustomed to cover the space immediately before their shops with vast pent-houses of wood, which, considering the state of decay in which they were permitted to remain, afforded scarcely any other advantage than to deprive the ground floor of the little light and air which remained in these narrow and gloomy streets. It was at least the only result produced by the enormous wooden pent-house, a masterpiece of the kind, which crowned the shop in question; for the carved planks of this dull fabric were rotten, disjointed, and threatened with its speedy fall the customers who frequented the concern. This gigantic blind sustained at a convenient height a plate of iron, upon which was depicted a knight armed at all points, sharing his mantle with a half naked beggar. Around this splendid specimen of painting was inscribed in large characters: Au Grand Saint Martin, *Nicolas Poliveau vend du drap et du velours.* Such was the sign in all its original ingenuity.

No glazed windows interposed to prevent the free access of wind to the shop. Two folding doors of oak lapped back upon the walls, and produced a striking effect. On each side were arranged small tables of old fashioned construction, piled with pieces of cloth or velvet, displayed for sale; and an apprentice watched diligently lest the exposed wares should tempt the covetousness of thieves or beggars. Beyond these stands, the view reached into the recesses of the warehouse, where the walls were covered from top to bottom with shelves piled with bales of goods.

Behind, there arose a well stair-case, old, heavy, and creaking, which led to the upper stories, and afforded, as did the shop, a common passage for the inmates of the house. Under the lower portion of this stair-case was constructed a glazed recess, which served as the counting house and cash office of the master of the establishment, and from whence he might survey his shopmen, or *apprentices*, as they were then termed. One long table, of which the legs were imbedded in the floor, reached from end to end of the warehouse, and on it they exposed the wares to the inspection of customers. But the light was so insufficient that these distrustful dealers carried or required the seller to convey over the threshold the pieces of their choice, in order fully to ascertain the colour and genuine quality of the stuff; so that the bargain was generally concluded in the street, under the protecting pent-house.

Wretchedly shabby as this ancient warehouse would at the present period appear to our spruce traders of the *boulevard*, nevertheless, about the year 1612 it enjoyed, as we have stated, a wonderful reputation. Nicholas

Poliveau, its proprietor, was a merchant with a heart in the right place, honourable, loyal, incapable of deceiving his customers, either in reference to the quality or value of his commodities. Moreover, personally, the worthy draper of the *Grand Saint Martin* belonged to the aristocracy of the townspeople, if we may be permitted such an expression. He had been master of the company of drapers, and in that capacity had carried the canopy at the entry of Marie de Medicis into Paris. He had also for many years performed the duty of magistrate at the municipal office; and this, according to the terms of the *ordonnance* of Henry the Third, had imparted nobility to him, of which the worthy man was in no small degree proud, although he did not wish to accede to its assumption. In consequence of this municipal attainment of rank, his shop was the resort of the most wealthy lords and the most noble ladies. Frequently was the street thronged with the emblazoned equipages of duchesses, the mules of prelates, and the jennets of gentlemen; a swarm of pages and lackeys promenaded in the fetid mire which surrounded his house; and the neighbours, who beheld all these sumptuous retinues stop at the door of the honest draper, were swollen with envy.

We ought to mention, that this patronage was not entirely owing to the excellent character which the venerable magistrate enjoyed, and to the superior quality of his fabrics in silk or wool. It is only just to refer a portion of this prosperity to a young and handsome person —*Mademoiselle Rosette Poliveau*, his only daughter, who usually was enthroned, with queenly rule, behind her father's counter.

Rosette was a little brunette, of arch and merry deportment, and was endowed with all the attractive graces peculiar to the Parisian commercial females. She possessed coquetry of an exciting and decisive nature, which she employed without compromising herself in its exercise. She was irresistible — completely so with the men, when she praised the tints or the texture of her cloth or velvet; and the young nobles came from the other side of Paris to purchase the material for a doublet chosen by "The Little Rosette", "The daughter of Poliveau", or "*La Belle Drapiere*"; for they gave these various appellations to the young tradeswoman. It was considered an indication of correct taste at the Louvre to have made their purchases from her; and the usual reply of a fop, if the shade of his mantle was criticized, was, that he had found nothing more stylish with the daughter of Poliveau.

The general impression was, that this little city damsel must be very vain of the striking importance which attached to her, and that she had more than once indulged the idea of changing her hood of cloth for a hood of velvet; which meant, according to the phrase of the time, that she would marry one of the handsome young nobles who paid their attentions and were deeply enamoured of her. But although she was gay, thoughtless, and perhaps a little vain, Rosette was sensible, and moreover felt the most tender affection for her old father, who doated on her. Consequently, calumny had never been able to fix its fang upon her, and her reputation in the *Rue de Tixeranderie* was that of the strictest propriety.

It is true that certain sparks allowed themselves to suppose they saw some personal encouragement in the

winning smiles, the pleasantries, the agreeable chat, which Rosette bestowed on those who frequented the warehouse; but they were speedily made aware that they had confounded the young maiden with the mere shopwoman, and that she had favoured them with neither more nor less than any other customer. Several, who had been too presuming, and had offered towards her some liberties which the shopwomen of the time would not generally resent, had been made to repent their impertinence. One who, taking advantage of the absence of Poliveau, had dared to snatch a kiss from Rosette, found himself at once attacked by the two apprentices of the shop, one armed with the long metal shears, and the other with a large cudgel which he had constantly at hand; so that the insolent fellow was obliged to fly precipitately, or his rank of gentleman would not have saved him from being sacrificed by the attendants.

Such were the sources of prosperity accruing to the establishment to which our tale refers. In addition to which, it is to be recollected, that, during two centuries, the *Poliveaus* were drapers from generation to generation; that the establishment had been kept in the same place, with the same internal and external arrangements; that the sign of the *Great Saint Martin* had been displayed over the venerable pent-house ever since the reign of the good Charles the Seventh. Add to this, that Master Nicholas had liberally assigned to his neighbours, when he was quitting office, the watercourse to which the magistrates of the city were entitled, in consequence of which there had been constructed at the corner of the *Rue de Mouton* a very handsome fountain, on which his name was

inscribed, and you may understand to what a degree of popularity the worthy citizen had attained in his neighbourhood.

Unfortunately, every medal has its reverse, and having recounted the causes which led to the uprise of the house of Poliveau, we must now mention some rumours which had begun to circulate of its approaching decay. Just about the period at which this tale commences, there were whispers that the ambition of Poliveau would soon cause his downfall. Although he had devoted great attention to the affairs of the municipality at the *Hotel de Ville*, the magistrate had neglected his own business in his shop, and the bright eyes and pleasant chatting of Rosette could not prevent the prices of silks and cloth from varying in a manner prejudicial to her father's interests. Moreover, the fine ladies and gentlemen who frequented the establishment were not at all exact in the payment of their accounts, and it was insinuated that Poliveau had received more than one rebuff for evincing too great an anxiety for the discharge of debts due by his noble customers. Already he was the object of pitying looks and hypocritical grimaces, and it went so far in some little coteries, as to be stated, that the poor magistrate was on the eve of bankruptcy—that he would, perhaps, be obliged to wear the green cap, which would be a great mortification to the fraternity of drapers and to his friends, and such like insinuations. We need not repeat all the gossip of these kindly disposed acquaintances, but we shall presently see how far these sad rumours were well founded.

One morning, before the usual time for the arrival of the wealthy customers, Rosette was already at her post in

her father's shop. The master was absent, and his daughter, assisted by the two apprentices, who were going backward and forward with a very busy appearance, prepared to fill his place to the best of her ability. Mademoiselle Poliveau was attired as a plain citizen's daughter conformably to the rules of modesty and the sumptuary laws then in force; but her habiliments, although exclusively of woollen material, displayed an appearance of taste and elegance which a highborn lady might envy. Her short gown of a brown colour, very tight and carefully closed about her neck, in the Flemish fashion, admirably displayed the shape of her slender waist. Her skirt of ample dimensions and large folds, was sufficiently short to permit a view of her little feet neatly encased in black shoes. A plaited ruff covered, without concealing, her finely turned shoulders. In other respects, she displayed neither patches on her face, nor rosettes of ribbon, at that time called *assassines*, *mignons*, *galants*, *etc.*, and as if her attire, demure as it was, still appeared too gay to the fair damsel, she wore an apron of serge very plain, then termed a *devantier*, and her head dress was the cloth hood which was the characteristic mark of her condition.

Notwithstanding the disadvantage of her costume, Rosette was charming, and the citizens who passed through the *Rue de la Tixeranderie* at this early hour did not fail to cast on her looks of admiration. The young shopwoman was seated in her usual position behind one of the counters which crossed the large entrance to the warehouse. From thence she braved the lively curiosity of the foot passengers, contriving at the same to satisfy her own, for across the bales of merchandize which formed the display, the

sly damsel could, at her leisure, observe what occurred on the thoroughfare, and even amongst her neighbours. Nevertheless it is not to be understood that such was the only occupation of Rosette Poliveau. At that day a young damsel of her age would conceive herself disgraced by indulging in indolent habits at home; consequently, whilst her sparkling eyes took ambushed glances at whatever occurred in the street, her pretty fingers were knitting a large woollen stocking intended to be presented to Master Poliveau at the feast of St. Nicholas.

Although at all times Rosette possessed a fair share of the curiosity which renders solitude and silence the greatest punishments of woman, it seemed as if on this particular day she had some secret motive for observing the passengers with marked attention. Her observation was directed towards one extremity of the street, and she seemed to manifest a feeling of disappointment as persons of humble condition continued to pass; still as the morning advanced, her lively, gay deportment was changed, and she assumed an expression of impatience and discontent. Oftentimes she suspended her work, and stretched forward to observe some cavalier gliding along the street, wrapped in his mantle, but it was only to set her fingers again into active movement, and sighing, she divided the threads of her worsted skein.

The unusual preoccupation of their young mistress did not escape the observation of the two apprentices who were arranging the wares and bundles at the end of the shop, and doubtless, they were aware of its cause, for they exchanged, from time to time, looks full of meaning, in reference to her. These apprentices were young men who,

with qualities of different natures, were equally serviceable to their master. He who appeared the elder was a young man of twenty-five years of age, whose doublet and trunk breeches, although of plain brown cloth, were always of the newest fashion, and whose peruke was curled with the utmost care. He was active, intelligent, and had insinuating manners extremely agreeable to the customers. It was he who displayed at a signal from Rosette, the pieces of cloth or velvet, and he never failed to add a seasonable word in aid of the eloquence of his young mistress. Moreover, it was said that Giles Poinselot, as he was named, was an arrogant lad, who entertained notions beyond his station, and had drawn on himself many warning reproofs from Master Poliveau. There were some who declared that on Sundays, when his master's shop was closed, Giles dressed himself as a cavalier, girding a sword to his side, and placing a plumed hat on his head, in order to play the part of a gentleman at *Cours-la-Reine* or in the vicinity of the *Louvre*. Several of the neighbours swore that they had seen him in such circumstances; but as the case was one that appeared to his master of the gravest importance, he did not wish to believe such matters without positive proofs, and the affair had not as yet been elucidated.

The other apprentice, on the contrary, was small, squat, dull and silent. He was the beast of burden or drudge of the establishment. By him the large bundles of stuffs were carried from one part of the shop to another, and he replaced them when the business was over. He was just as regardless of his personal appearance as his comrade was careful. The greater portion of the points which, according to the mode of the time, joined his trunk breeches

to his doublet, were either not linked or fastened awry. His peruke was always in disorder, in consequence of his habit of carrying burdens on his head, and he thus had acquired the nick-name amongst the neighbours of *L'Ebouriffé*. We hasten to add that it was not advisable to designate him by this appellation in the hearing of the stouter apprentice, or to name him otherwise than as Guillaume Leroux. He spoke but seldom and was very laconic, but he was prompt in action, and at the first provocation, he fell upon his antagonist with a pair of fists that might have felled an ox.

Such as they were, these two young fellows agreed admirably on all points; they constituted between them an unity of purpose to which one supplied the mind and the other the body. Besides, they were linked by one common feeling and sentiment. Each entertained a personal and peculiar love for his young mistress, and this attachment which might be expected to disunite them, only drew them the closer. Beholding Rosette incessantly surrounded by young and gallant nobles, who supposed they might address to her any phrases prompted by a vein of bantering or levity, which the two poor apprentices could not dare to display, and convinced that the draper's pretty daughter, intoxicated by such flattering attentions, would never waste a thought upon her humble admirers, they conceived a common hatred to the aristocracy. All the fops who frequented the shop of Poliveau were considered as enemies by the two apprentices, and when one of them would speak with familiarity to Rosette, Giles's countenance would rapidly alternate from red to white, whilst Guillaume would gnash his teeth in the corner. But if

the spark urged his familiarity to a degree of insolence with the pretty shopkeeper, Giles vociferated at once, "On, on, Guillaume!" and then each seized the one his half ell measure, and the other his immense shears, and the offender was obliged to make a precipitate retreat.

On the morning of which we are speaking, the apprentices appeared to share the evident disquietude of their young mistress. They both seemed grave and troubled; and it might be supposed that some misfortune threatened the family of Poliveau. At this period, now remote from us, the inmates and domestics did not consider themselves as distinct from the family in which their services had been accepted: they attached themselves to their masters, and shared their good or adverse fortune: in fact they felt as members of the family in which they lived. Thus the sympathetic feeling of these two young fellows is accounted for by the interest inspired in their hearts by everything that referred to Poliveau or the draper's pretty daughter.

The patience of Rosette was at an end the moment the bell of the neighbouring church tolled noon; she let fall her worsted bobbin, and murmured with vexation and involuntarily: "My God! he will never come!"

This exclamation appeared to decide Giles Poinselot, who hovered for a few minutes about the young girl, to approach. He darted to snatch up the bobbin which had rolled to some distance, and presented it, observing in an under tone: "Courage, demoiselle. Why fret yourself thus? The citizen must soon return, and we may expect that he will have completed the ten thousand crowns which he is bound to pay to-morrow at this hour to that accursed usurer, Jacomeny".

Rosette regarded him intently as if she had not understood the meaning of his expression, whilst she resumed her work, saying with some levity: "Yes, yes, Master Giles, I am not troubled. All that will be easily arranged, I have no doubt".

The apparent indifference of the young girl touching the important affair in which Poliveau was engaged, seemed to produce a disagreeable effect upon the apprentice. "What! demoiselle", asked he in a whisper, "are you not aware that if this sum be not fully discharged before noon to-morrow to Jacomeny, he will close—in truth, I dare not mention what will happen to us all?"

Rosette made a disdainful gesture; "Go to your work, Master Giles", she replied pettishly; "you are as sad as the ringer of a passing bell. It might be supposed, to hear you, that the shop of the *Grand St. Martin* was to be closed to-morrow, and that my father had already all the serjeants and tipstaves of the Chatelet at his heels. Go to your work, I say. The market hour is come, and the customers will be presently appearing".

The apprentice did not stir, but hung down his head in some confusion. "It is not my wish to offend you, demoiselle", replied he with humility; "and since it is not the delay of our master that causes your inquietude——"

"And why should you suppose that my father's absence frets me to-day more than at any other time?" said Rosette in a tone of impatient levity. "He is gone to collect the money from some of our wealthy debtors, and there can be no doubt that he will speedily bring home more than his occasion requires. M. le Marechal alone

owes us on his personal and household account more than three thousand crowns, and the Duchesse de Liche ——"

"It is not upon these grand lords and noble dames that the citizen can reckon to enable him to pay Jacomeny", exclaimed the apprentice with bitterness. "No, no, believe it not, demoiselle; for if your father had no other assistance save what he derived from them, all would now be lost. Fortunately I am aware that he is to call about this time on his gossip, Gaudillot, the portly mercer of the *Rue Guernetat*—and that it is which gives me confidence. Guillaume and I", added he, casting a side glance at his fellow-apprentice, who listened to the conversation with an air of simplicity, "we know how these *rich* gentlefolk behave to those who call to collect the amount of their accounts".

Guillaume signified his assent by an execration which he growled forth from the depths of his ample chest.

"You forget", said the young girl with disdain, "the difference with which persons of quality treat my father and his apprentices; and they would think twice before they would behave insolently to a man who has been a magistrate of the city, and who was so near the dignity of provost. For I wish you to be aware, Master Giles, that we approach rather closely to the degree of nobility; it only requires that my father should register his letters patent in the parliament; and he fully intends to do so in a short time, when his affairs will be on a better footing. It will cost, they say, but a thousand livres. You see, then, they would not venture to offer any slight to such a man as my father. But you have always entertained a deep hatred to the nobility, Giles, you and this poor

blockhead, Guillaume; and take heed that it be not sufficient to stop the progress through the world of the one and the other of you".

Poinselot sighed, and in silence betook himself to his business at the end of the warehouse. As for Rosette, she seemed to forget forthwith this conversation, which doubtless had not sufficed to estrange her from her pervading reflections, and she continued to cast stealthy glances at the passengers whilst she plied her needles with dexterity.

Some moments passed away. All at once the young girl started and stretched across the door as if to observe some one advancing, and she murmured rather inaudibly: "Here he is at last". But all at once she rejoined in a tone of great impatience: "No, it is the Comte de Maule, the nobleman who is always followed by a regiment of pages and lackeys. Come, lads, prepare to receive him: a seat for M. le comte".

The young men applied themselves to fetch from the corner of the shop an old arm-chair padded with leather, and reserved for customers of importance.

"He comes, perhaps, with the hundred and thirty livres for the piece of velvet which he bought six months ago", said the incorrigible Giles, looking at his young mistress.

"Peace!" replied she authoritatively; "do not be the first to speak of such a trifle, especially as monsieur seems very sad and greatly downcast". At the moment she uttered these words, the count entered the shop supported by two of his people, and Rosette rose quickly to receive him.

This personage was a man of from forty to forty-five

years, well made, though a little corpulent; of a complexion still fresh; and whose well curled moustache did not display a grey hair. He was dressed with all the elegance of a finished courtier. His ruff, then termed *a confusion*, was bordered with the richest lace; his doublet was of magnificent taffety, ornamented with rosettes of ribbon of the brightest hue; his trunk breeches, of a scarlet colour, were of ample dimensions; his points were of gold; his *ladrines*, or large boots, slashed above the ancles, exposed to view stockings of crimson silk, according to the fashion introduced by Pompignan; over his large peruke of fair hair, was placed jauntily a small round hat, shaded by a showy bunch of feathers. At his side he wore a duelling sword of the description termed *a coquille;* and long golden spurs jingled at his heels, although he came on foot.

The Count de Manle, since such were the name and title which they gave this cavalier, was melancholy and downcast, as Rosette had remarked; and such was his absence of mind, that he never seemed to perceive the young girl when he had entered the shop. He leaned, on one side, on a short-necked man dressed in black, who might be supposed to be his secretary. On the other, he was supported by a lackey dressed in rich livery, who was his valet-de-chambre. Both paid the most respectful attentions to their master, and seemed to guide his steps with great care, as if, in his condition of moral prostration, he was incapable of acting for himself. Under the pent-house of the shop there remained two other attendants of rather villainous physiognomy, who looked more

like a couple of thorough-paced ruffians, than followers of an honourable house. All these people, taking example by their master, assumed gloomy and sorrow-stricken countenances.

Meanwhile Rosette advanced to receive the stranger, and made him a most respectful obeisance; but the distracted nobleman raised not his hand towards his hat, and did not appear even aware of her presence.

"Your servant, M. le comte", repeated Rosette, curtseying yet lower, and adding in a winning tone: "What may be your excellency's commands to-day?" But his excellency replied not, and advanced mechanically towards the seat which had been prepared by the apprentices.

"Monseigneur, can I be informed——"

"Hush!" said the secretary with an air of mystery, applying his finger to his mouth.

"Hush!" said the valet-de-chambre with an expression of dismay in his countenance.

Rosette and the apprentices regarded them with great wonder, not knowing to what they should ascribe this strange visit. The two attendants, in deep silence, settled their master in the arm-chair in the centre of the warehouse. When once seated, he remained sad and motionless in the position they had placed him, his arms hanging down, his eyes fixed and glassy, like one in a catalepsy. Then the secretary and the valet-de-chambre retired a few steps behind him, displaying every symptom of deep anguish. Rosette slipped gently towards them, and whispered in the ear of the gentleman in black: "Holy Virgin! M. le secretaire, what has occurred to

your master?—he who is at all times so polite, so lively, so ready to oblige——"

"Monseigneur has received yesterday afflicting intelligence from his estates", replied the secretary in a sepulchral tone, "and has since remained in the state you see".

"For twenty-four hours he has not taken sleep or food", added the valet-de-chambre in a voice of woe, raising his hand as if to brush away a tear from a tearless eye. "We are in danger of losing a good master".

Rosette cast a look on the fresh and ruddy countenance of the count, and could not avoid thinking that the nobleman did not exhibit the jaded and exhausted appearance to be expected from so long a fast. Meanwhile she replied in a voice of lively interest: "The intelligence which monseigneur has received is then very calamitous?"

"Oh, yes, very calamitous", said the secretary, turning away his head, whilst the valet-de-chambre heaved a deep sigh.

"Excuse my curiosity, gentlemen", answered the young girl, "but really what communication has arrived to the count? Has he received an account of the decease of one of his parents?"

The secretary shook his head.

"Has his chateau been consumed by fire? Has he lost his property?"

This last question seemed strongly to arouse the feelings of the two attendants. The one assumed an air of disdainful pity, the other of high indignation.

"His chateau, mademoiselle! You should say his chateaux; for he has eight, of which the smallest is

as fine as the Louvre. For what do you take our master and us his attendants?"

"His property!" repeated the other. "The city folk have a singular fashion of talking. The property of monseigneur! Why, his property consists of the splendid 'Comtè de Maule', which contains three towns, one hundred and fifty villages, of which one hundred and twenty are parishes—of forests, lakes, rivers; and I cannot imagine that such property can be lost like the purse of an old thief of a trader returning from the fair of Saint Germain".

This sharpness brought a glow into the face of the young girl, whilst her curiosity repressed her resentment: "But then, gentlemen, explain yourselves to me".

"The news which has arrived will cost the lives of 'the world and all'", said the secretary distractedly, as if he could not restrain his thoughts. "Monseigneur has sworn to punish all the offenders, and he can do so, for on his domains he has a jurisdiction of life and death; he will pardon nobody".

"Think you so, monsieur?" asked the valet, with a woeful aspect, "still our master is not unrelenting".

"True, but in this family the slightest affliction impairs the reason. I have read in a manuscript which is extant in the library of Maule, that the Count Adhémar the Fourth, the great-grandfather of monseigneur, had fifty poor wretches torn asunder by horses, because they had forgotten to close up a cistern in which he was almost drowned".

"Let us hope that our worthy lord will not go to such lengths", said the valet-de-chambre, groaning.

This dialogue took place in an under-tone, in presence of Rosette and the apprentices, who had drawn nigh to listen. The young girl perceiving that her applications could not wrest from the attendants the secret cause of the count's affliction, and the motive which brought him to the shop, went to resume her place with disdain, when the secretary remarked with greater courtesy than he had previously evinced:

"Take heed, mademoiselle, not to evince any sign of gaiety or satisfaction towards monseigneur, if he should address you; he would never forgive you for being merry when he has such a heavy heart, and your father would pay dear for your unseasonable indulgence, he would inevitably lose my master's custom—I warn you of it".

"That is a splendid matter, that custom!" growled Giles.

"I shall do my best, monsieur", replied the young girl; "but to render me really sorrowful, all at once, it would be better to confide to me the reason of monseigneur's trouble".

The secretary cast an inquiring glance at his companion as if seeking his advice, the valet-de-chambre made a sign of assent.

"Well then", replied the man of confidence, lowering his voice, and looking round with an appearance of disquiet, "you must know that by the fault of M. de Nangis, the majordomo of the Chateau de Manle——"

"Well, what?"

"The pet fawn which monseigneur loved so dearly, and which was domesticated in the apartments of the chateau, died three days since. A courier arrived with the intelligence yesterday morning".

This revelation was made in a tone of solemnity, and the speaker seemed again overcome by terror and grief. The malicious Rosette could scarcely refrain from a violent fit of laughter, but the settled and sad aspect of the followers, the presence of the count, and above all the habit she had acquired of patiently enduring the nonsense of the frequenters of the shop, restrained her in time. She replied turning away her head: "This is indeed a great misfortune! M. le comte must have loved this pet fawn very much, when her death affects him so deeply?"

"Loved her!" said the secretary, raising his eyes towards Heaven: "so beautiful, so noble an animal. Oh! yes, he loved her, and we all loved her as he did".

"Oh! yes, all", repeated the valet-de-chambre.

"However, gentlemen", said Rosette, tired perhaps, of these lamentations, "since monseigneur does not seem inclined to speak, you will inform me at least what has brought him to our shop, and what are his commands?"

The valet-de-chambre turned towards the secretary: "Do you know, monsieur, the matter to which the young girl refers? Our master has not disclosed his intentions to me".

"I rather think", replied the gentleman in black, carelessly, "that he is come to Poliveau's to purchase cloth to put all his grooms and pages in mourning, in memory of his well-beloved pet fawn".

"And without doubt, he wishes to get the cloth on credit, like the piece of velvet", said Giles Poinselot with the most bitter anger, and without troubling himself as to whether he was heard by the count or his followers.

The secretary and valet-de-chambre directed most furious

looks at the insolent apprentice, and lucky for him it was, that at this moment, the silent nobleman seemed to revive from his depression, and exclusively attracted their attention. The count gently raised his head and gazed around him, as if to assure himself of where he was, whilst all at once he exclaimed with that affected Italian accent which was at the period assumed to flatter the Queen and the Marèchal d'Ancre by all those who frequented the court or pretended to frequent it:

"Ah! but, on my word, I am at my friend Poliveau's, the king of merchant drapers, and I wish that the Devil may fetch me away, if I know how I have come hither".

Meanwhile, observing Rosette, who made him another obeisance, he arose courteously, raised his chapeau, and replied with the fulsome and almost puerile gallantry of the period:

"Bless me! mademoiselle, I comprehend at once what has attracted me into this shop: your lovely eyes, which shed such a jewelled lustre, and are like a brilliant lighthouse to wretched voyagers".

This bombastic compliment was too much in the hackneyed style of the times, and Rosette was too well accustomed to expressions of the kind, to pay it much attention. Nevertheless, she blushed with an agreeable sensation, and modestly replied, that she could not suppose his excellency would be so excited by so humble an individual.

"Yes, indeed", cried the count, who for the moment seemed to forget everything about his pet fawn; "you are not aware, mademoiselle, how often you are mentioned in the highest circles; and I will tell you in confidence, that

it is only three days since you were the topic of conversation in the queen's boudoir".

"Speak of me in the queen's presence!" exclaimed the damsel coquettishly, whilst her eyes glowed with extraordinary brilliancy.

"It is as I have the honour to state; and I have heard myself M. le Marechal——. But how is this?" continued the count, casting a look at his own person: "who has equipped me in this fashion? May God afflict me! I am prettily attired to appear before a handsome young lady, such as the daughter of my dear friend Poliveau, in the house of a magistrate of Paris!"

Rosette directed her attention to ascertain what in reference to his costume could so arouse the anger of the count. Not a ribbon of his dress was out of place.

Meanwhile he summoned his people with a loud voice to put him, as he termed it, in a state more befitting to appear in presence of the draper's pretty daughter. The lackeys who were at the shop door hastened to assist the valet-de-chambre to repair the supposed imperfection in their master's custome.

"Hark ye, scoundrels, hangdogs, I shall discharge ye all!" cried he with a rage perhaps simulated, whilst his people busied themselves around him. "There is not a particle of perfume in my peruke, and my *assassin* is quite awry. But, zounds, this is nothing", continued he, stretching forth his white plump hand half hidden by large ruffles of lace, "they have forgotten my rings. Where is my page of the jewels?"

"Here, monseigneur", replied a servant in a respectful tone.

"Do your duty, then, rascal", answered the count, holding out his fingers to him. "I shall flay you alive if you do not attend better to your business".

The servant drew from his pocket a casket which contained three rings apparently of great value and placed them on his master's fingers, which restored him a little to tranquillity.

"Go, let that suffice", said he indolently; "leave me awhile with my charming and amiable Rosette, whom I love horribly".

The domestics retired a few steps. The count crossed his legs, and leaned back in the arm-chair to be more at his ease; meanwhile he was silent, and the young girl with some embarrassment took her place again at the counter.

"I observe with pleasure, monseigneur", she said at length, "that you support your affliction with greater resolution than just now, and that this pet fawn——"

The gentleman started up and his countenance at once changed. "What say you?" replied he in an accent of despair, "and is she really dead? My poor Diana! dear fawn of my soul! I had forgotten her loss. Your sweet features suspended the recollection that I had lost that dear animal, when I would give millions to resuscitate her. Oh, mon Dieu! how miserable I am". At the same time he covered his face with his hands, and seemed to sob.

"What have you done, mademoiselle?" said the secretary angrily. "Your heart must be as hard as a rock. See to what a state you have reduced our dear master!"

Although Rosette sympathized but slightly with the

ridiculous grief of her customer, she could not avoid expressing regret for awakening by a thoughtless word his violent despair.

"Let us speak no further on this sad subject", replied the count, heaving a deep sigh, and wiping his red eyelids with a lace handkerchief. "Cruel and unfeeling lady, your beauty had imparted to my wounds a balm which your words have neutralized".

"How polite and well turned a compliment", said the secretary. "What a good master we have!"

"But what brought me to my friend Poliveau's?" said the count, laying his fingers on his forehead to aid his memory. "In truth I had an object, but I am so confused. Ah! I have it", he continued in a melancholy tone: "I wished to order one hundred ells of black cloth to dress my people: I cannot bear that my loved fawn shall be deposited in the grave without every person being in mourning attire. I wish the cloth to be of the first selection, the most excellent and valuable in your possession. But where is the good man? Must I return here again?"

"It is not necessary that my father should be here to conclude this matter", said Rosette rising up; "and if monseigneur would take the trouble to choose himself the stuffs, every article he requires shall be sent according to his direction".

"I leave it all to you, my dear child", said the count carelessly. "Choose what is suitable; only recollect that it must be of the best and most valuable description".

"I trust your excellency will approve of it", said

Rosette, making a sign to the apprentices to look out the required articles.

But neither of them stirred, and they continued to whisper lowly and gaze on the fop who was reclining and displaying his graces in the centre of the warehouse.

"But it occurs to me", remarked he quietly, "your shopmen"—he designated the apprentices thus—"are undoubtedly required here, and they could not carry out such a heavy burden. I wish however to have the cloth to-day, and I shall send my people for it in two hours".

"Very well, M. le comte——"

As the young girl was about to conclude with his proposal, Giles Poinselot darted towards her, and said with remarkable energy: "Beware, Rosette; make no such bargain".

"What do you say, Master Giles?"

"I am thoroughly certain that this nobleman is a——"

"What is your shopman about?" demanded the count, without even turning his head towards the young apprentice, "and why does he interfere with our conversation?"

"I say", answered the young man, pale with rage, "that a prudent person should hesitate to give credit for one hundred ells of cloth to a frequenter of the gambling house of the *Pomme d'Or*, and whom I have seen playing with cogged dice".

A flush of indignation and surprise overspread the countenance of the Count de Maule; his people looked intently at him to penetrate his thoughts, and obey his slightest signal. On his side, Giles had summoned

his friend L'Ebouriffé, who stood close to him with his formidable shears in his hand. But the count, after casting on the apprentice a close and searching look, burst into a fit of loud laughter that made the entire shop ring.

"'Fore God!" cried he, throwing himself back in the arm-chair, "here's a comical rascal! I would be sworn that the clown has occasionally attired himself as a gentleman, and gone to risk his pistole at the *Pomme d'Or* like a man of quality. But yes, I remember now", continued he with a renewal of laughter and ridicule as he appeared to scrutinize the apprentice, "this is the fine gentleman whom I plucked on Sunday last. Although he was a boon companion, I doubted that he was a true gentleman: it required but to see his sword entangled between his legs, and the mode in which his ruff was fastened. Heavens! I shall afford immense amusement to some pleasant fellows of my acquaintance by the recital of this adventure". At the same time the count abandoned himself to a boisterous mirth, which his people joined in as far as respect permitted. Rosette herself could not avoid smiling; but she instantly resumed a serious tone in addressing Giles, who hung his head with a sad and embarrassed air.

"Can this be true, Master Giles? Have you really presumed to slip in amongst gentlemen and——"

"Well, 'tis true, demoiselle", replied the apprentice, making a courageous effort for his vindication. "I avow that a silly curiosity, a desire to assume the bearing and manner of these people of quality who please you so much, have induced me two or three times to visit a

gaming house frequented by young nobles. You will inform the worthy citizen of it; he will drive me disgracefully from his employment; I see that before me; but I prefer to be treated according to my demerits rather than suffer my good master, whose bread I have eaten for five years, to become the victim of a knave. I declare, moreover, that this gentleman for all his fine airs, is celebrated at the *Pomme d'Or* as a sharper who can play the double shuffle, the shove, or the wax trick, at cards, and is skilled in every description of cheating so well that in two hands he won my money. I have been enlightened in these details by a poor devil who witnessed my ill luck, and who had on other occasions been the victim of this gentleman's dexterity. I am informed by him also, that although the Count de Manle associated with persons of undoubted distinction, he was suspected of supporting himself by his gains at play; no one knew where were his estates, or the source of his revenues, and generally even his residence was a matter of obscurity. My informant also avers that his pretended valets are——. But I say no more. You have heard enough to make you reconsider ere you give a schemer such a considerable credit as that of an hundred ells of cloth; for such a loss would be fatal at this crisis to our excellent master".

There must have been a very warm attachment to his employer, and a deep feeling of probity in the young apprentice, to bring him to such a painful avowal. Whilst he yet spoke, the perspiration bedewed his face, and his frame trembled convulsively. The domestics of the count hearing their master described

as a swindler and sharper, expressed by their gestures the highest degree of indignation.

"Monseigneur", observed the valet-de-chambre, "respect alone prevents us from breaking the bones of this saucy fellow in your presence. But if you allow us——".

"No, no", said the count, with an affected easiness, and continuing to laugh; "I find this scoundrel highly amusing. He amuses me greatly — vastly! and this is a solace to the grief which my poor, well-beloved Diana gives me. Is there any one who would attend to what rogues of his description would say? Besides, he has lost his all to me; and we must forgive him for his wretched play when we consider that he is not a respectable person".

During this scene it may be supposed that Rosette was greatly perplexed and embarrassed. There was in the accusation preferred by the repentant apprentice an appearance of candour and truth sufficient to raise her scruples against the enormous credit tacitly demanded by the Count de Manle. On the other hand, the vices of the great noblemen of the period were so unrestrained, and it was so common to find gentlemen cheating at play, or doing even worse, that the young girl could not judge whether this circumstance furnished sufficient grounds for quarrelling with him. Besides, she had seen him in company with personages of high distinction, who treated him as being on a footing of perfect equality. In this perplexity she frequently looked across the street, as if expecting the appearance of her father, who alone could remove every difficulty.

At this moment a new figure crossed the threshold of the door, and Rosette briskly rose with an expression of joyful surprise. Her eyes glistened with unusual brilliancy; and nevertheless it was not her father who had caused such a lively emotion. The new comer was a young cavalier of seventeen or eighteen years at most, whose upper lip was scarcely shaded by a rising moustache, and whose blue eyes were of captivating sweetness of expression. He was attired with equal richness as the Count de Maule, but with more taste, and all that in the mode of the period argued a ridiculous affectation was banished from his toilet. Thus he wore no peruke, and his fine flaxen hair fell in long curls on his shoulders. Also his doublet and trunk breeches were of the best fashion, and the velvet mantle which waved on his left shoulder imparted to him an appearance of neatness and elegance. Notwithstanding his extreme youth and bashfulness, he affected a slight degree of aristocratic assurance that was quite prepossessing, and made his way through the lackeys of the count, who waited outside the door, with the commanding and dignified deportment of a man accustomed to exercise authority.

His attentions were at once directed to Rosette, who stood blushing, with downcast eyes. The accomplished young cavalier raised his plumed chapeau, and respectfully bowed to her, and without even perceiving the presence of others, was proceeding to address her in complimentary language, when all at once the Count de Maule started from his seat, and rushed towards him with open arms.

"Eh! 'tis he, in faith! the dear little Marquis de

Villenègre!" exclaimed the count with an overstrained appearance of delight. "My life for it, but I must embrace you".

The Marquis de Villenègre did not seem overjoyed at the meeting when he found himself accosted by the count. Nevertheless he assumed a smiling countenance, and having directed a look of regret at Rosette, he turned his attention to the excessive civilities of the Count de Manle.

"Eh! how fares it then?" continued he, holding by the hand the young gentleman, whose looks betrayed his embarrassment. "And the dear Duc de Villenègre, your father, and the excellent duchess, your mother — may I inquire after their health? They are not about to die soon, and leave you this gay duchy of Villenègre, where it is reported they have such fine hoards? We never see you now at the king's audience or the queen's court, nor at church; and that is a pity; for, handsome and noble though you be, you will not make your way amongst the ladies. Mind, I tell you that".

This tone of familiarity between the two gentlemen would lead a person to suppose that they were related, or at least that they had been acquainted for a considerable time. But it was no such thing. At this time it sufficed for two men of rank, or pretenders to rank, to meet each other twice or thrice in a tennis court or a tavern, to warrant such ridiculous manifestations of friendship; and such was exactly the case in the present instance of the Marquis de Villenègre and the Count de Manle.

"My dear de Manle", said the young man, anxiously endeavouring to disengage his arms and cut short these long compliments, "you will excuse me if——"

"You shall not escape me so, brother", replied the other, laughing. "I have not met you since the day I lent you a few hundred crowns. Now do not draw out your purse; you can pay me some other time; I am in funds at present. I know your father does not supply you with the pistoles as liberally as he should. But will you allow me to tell why you hide yourself in this manner? You are in love, marquis. I wager a hundred pistoles you are in love!"

The marquis blushed and hung his head, whilst his heightened colour was reflected on the countenance of Rosette.

The Count de Manle was not a person to let such a circumstance pass unperceived. He was silent at once, and gazed closely at the two young people, whose confusion was augmented by his scrutiny. The malicious fellow took no heed, and seemed to have a pleasure in prolonging their embarrassment, adding in a vein of raillery: "I have discovered one thing, marquis—you are not enamoured of a courtly dame, but of some citizen's daughter, fresh and pretty enough for a first passion. This is always the way such matters commence. Young fellows such as you do not begin with duchesses, who are, notwithstanding, very kind and indulgent creatures; and here is", continued the count, curling his moustache, "a comrade of yours who could tell you some anecdotes of them".

"You are vaunting, brother, you are making your boasts", said the marquis, eagerly taking the opportunity to turn the conversation, "and if I dared in the presence of mademoiselle, to repeat some naughty stories which are told of you——"

But the count was too cunning to relinquish the topic he had introduced.

"Let those naughty tales pass", interrupted he, "and let us chat a little concerning yourself: you acknowledge then, that you are enamoured of a '*chaperon de drap*'—of a citizen's daughter, shall I tell?"

"I have acknowledged nothing", cried Villenègre, quickly.

"Ah! you are all discretion. It is well; you are right, my young friend, I am of the same disposition myself; but tell me—the fair one of course reciprocates your attachment?"

"In truth", cried young Villenègre, almost forgetting to whom he spoke, and casting a stolen glance at Rosette, "I have not been able to obtain, for the last two months, the favour of speaking to her unless in the presence of another".

The count burst again into a boisterous laugh, so that the marquis was puzzled whether he should join in his hilarity, or be seriously offended.

"Oh! the famous knight of king Arthur's time", cried de Maule, "how I recognize the similarity to my own early adventures. But, between ourselves, brother, I perceive clearly, that since you are so little advanced in your amour after two months' attentions, you have certainly not selected a duchess for your object".

The marquis now sought an opportunity for a quarrel, so as to deliver himself from the impertinence of this malicious fellow. He replied with severity: "Count, you are very particular in your remarks concerning duchesses; you forget that my respected mother——"

"Eh, who says a word of your respected mother, whom I esteem and honour profoundly? They are not duchesses of fifty years of age, whose conduct I referred to, and you know that well. But let the matter pass. I am known to be of good family, I have a refined sense of honour, and a tolerable share of courage, so that you must not compel me to call you out, merely for holding you to be a man of gallantry as I am myself".

"Meanwhile, count, your sarcasm upon the duchesses?"

"You wish we should say no more about duchesses? Well, let us talk of the *bourgeoises*. You say, then, that the cruel one lacerates your poor heart? She shall make you amends, the heartless one! For, in short, I call to witness this most agreeable and respectable demoiselle, Rosette de Poliveau"—(and whilst speaking, the count had taken the marquis by the hand, and placed him directly facing the young girl, thereby increasing her embarrassment). "Look on this handsome face", continued he, describing the noble and ingenuous appearance of the marquis; "behold these eyes sparkling like diamonds, this complexion of the lily and rose, this moustache so neat, and tell me, I beseech you, have you ever beheld a more charming cavalier".

This bombastic interrogatory sufficed to put the young people quite out of countenance.

"Monseigneur", at last stammered Rosette, twisting the corner of her apron, "without wishing to deny the merit of M. le marquis, you are well aware that it is not the province of a young girl like me——"

"But this is not all", resumed the imperturbable flatterer, "my most excellent friend, Villenègre, has wit, he has

high birth, and it is said that the duchy which he must have some day, is worth one hundred thousand crowns. With that he is brave, a good player, and all the ladies of the court would idolize him if he would condescend to cast on them one poor, slight look of compassion. Well, tell me, should not the cruel author of his tormenting passion be proud of having such an accomplished admirer?"

Rosette, to whom this question was addressed, did not reply, and Villenègre, who, notwithstanding his ridiculous position, anxiously observed every movement of the young girl, interrupted his extraordinary friend with a kind of vexation.

"Heavens! my dear de Manle", said he, looking at Rosette, "do you not perceive that you cause great annoyance to mademoiselle in asking her to express for me an esteem she does not possess?"

"M. le marquis cannot suppose——"

"I say at least", resumed the count, with thorough coolness, "that Mademoiselle Rosette, severe and cruel as she is, cannot avoid approving of what my young friend has just done; a few days since, Polastron stated at a *table d'hôte*, that the marquis was enamoured of a *bourgeoise*, and that she had accepted him as her lover. This *bourgeoise* was a young girl, prudent, and of fair reputation, whom I will not mention by name—"

"Count", quickly interrupted Villenègre, "how have you arrived at the knowledge——"

"Fear not, I shall not go too far. This is the next occurrence—the marquis finds Polastron amongst his boon companions, and says to him: 'Cavalier, you have stated that I was the favourite of a virtuous young female; you

have made a mistake, and I request you to retract'. Polastron replies, that he will do no such thing. Out they go, and Polastron has received a severe sword-thrust in the shoulder, which still confines him to bed, and thus the reputation of the young woman is vindicated".

During this narrative Rosette evinced a lively emotion; is was easy to guess who was the young bourgeoise for whom the marquis had fought, and fixing upon him her tearful eyes, she said: "And you have done this, M. de Villenègre? You have defended the honour of an humble female of a rank inferior to your own? You have fought for her? Your conduct was noble, and I thank you in the name of her whose reputation you protected".

Thus speaking, she extended her hand to Villenègre, who carried it to his lips and slipped into it a little note. At another moment Rosette would perhaps have refused to receive such a communication, but her mind was still greatly excited by the narrative of the count, and the paper passed quickly from her hand to the pocket of her apron. One person alone noticed this transaction, and that was Giles Poinselot.

From this moment Villenègre appeared to support much more patiently than before the endless compliments and importunities of the count. The conversation became more connected between the two gentlemen. They talked of the court, the news of the day, and at each allusion which they made to certain love adventures, Villenègre cast a look at Rosette, who kept silence with downcast eyes. Meanwhile the secretary and valet-de-chambre of the count had joined the lackeys who waited in the street, and were with them engaged in sneering at and mocking

to their faces all who passed. As for the apprentices, they had retired to the far end of the shop, and there attentively watched the two gentlemen, who fluttered like butterflies around the young bourgeoise: Guillaume, leaning on a pile of cloth, his hand upon the enormous shears which constituted his usual weapon, remained perfectly motionless; Giles, on the contrary, evinced frequent symptoms of impotent and silent rage—he clenched his hands, and stood with heaving breast. The count, with many sighs and looks directed towards Heaven, recounted to the young marquis the qualities, perfections, and beauties of his departed pet fawn, when the appearance of another person who turned the corner of the adjoining street and rapidly advanced towards the warehouse, effected a change in their conference. The apprentices suffered an expression of satisfaction to escape them, and Rosette stood up quickly; at the same instant Master Poliveau entered the shop preceded by two stout porters carrying on their shoulders leathern travelling bags, which seemed full of coin.

Poliveau was a little man, corpulent and low, whose honest ruddy countenance showed as yet but few wrinkles, although he had numbered sixty years. A thick riding coat of brown linsey-wolsey, black woollen stockings, a hat with large brim and high crown, presented in his costume an appearance of great simplicity, and of an antiquated mode, especially as the stuff appeared threadbare in more than one place. Instead of a ruff he wore a collar turned down, agreeable to the trim of the late King Charles the Ninth; and, in defiance of fashion, he had declined to cover his grey hairs with a large peruke. Altogether

the exterior of the worthy magistrate suggested the idea of an honest trader with whom it was far more important to observe his commercial engagements than to dazzle the eyes of his customers by his personal equipment.

On perceiving the gentlemen who were in the shop, a slight expression of displeasure appeared on his countenance; but he at once restrained himself, and saluted politely, though coldly, the two strangers who had risen to receive him. On their part, the count and the marquis had too strong motives for seeking the good opinion of the old trader to avoid giving him a reception far warmer than strict etiquette required. The one stretched out his hand, the other bowed very low.

"Eh! good morrow, mine excellent friend Poliveau", said the count with an overstrained politeness. "Verily, I am penetrated with delight to the depths of my soul to see you so fresh and ruddy".

"I salute you, Sire* Poliveau", said the marquis in an endearing manner.

"Good morning, gentlemen, good morning", answered the trader in a rough tone; "your servant—but before replying to your compliments, permit me to dismiss these good fellows. Come, my friends", resumed he, addressing the two porters who had accompanied him, "set down this money on the counter; and you, ye lazy sluggards", continued he, speaking to the apprentices, "take it, and stow it in my strong box in the back shop".

The porters laid their charge on the oaken table and

* They addressed at this period the merchants of Paris by the term "sire".

retired, whilst the apprentices applied themselves to obey their master's orders. The Count de Maule surveyed with astonishment the bags paraded on the counter, and seemed as if calculating the amount they might contain.

"Good God!" exclaimed he at last, "these city folk have more money than we gentlemen! There, by my word, are as many crowns as my *comte de Maule* produces in three months!"

"Yes, monsieur", replied the merchant peevishly as he seated himself upon a wooden bench beside his daughter, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead; "but your money and that of other great personages is destined to be expended in extravagance, gaming parties, rings, fine equipages, and the like. This money of ours and of such as we are is intended to pay our debts".

"In fact", said the count coolly, "I am told that the traders have amongst themselves what they term bills and bonds, and that when the day appointed to discharge them arrives they are paid punctually. This is really very strange".

"And when the gentlemen who take our merchandize on credit refuse to settle with us", continued Poliveau in a vein of fresh spleen, "we cannot but find ourselves seriously incommoded".

This sarcasm was addressed undoubtedly to the two gentlemen, for both of them were debtors to the respectable magistrate; but neither of them seemed to take offence, and Rosette, who wished to change the conversation, asked her father earnestly: "You appear fatigued, dear father! have you then been obliged to solicit your

noble customers to complete the sum of which you stood in need?"

This question produced an effect altogether different from that which Rosette intended.

"To the Devil with our noble customers!" said Poliveau roughly, but correcting himself at once, he added, "It is not in reference to you I speak, messieurs; but in truth, I would be better pleased that my gossip, Gandelot, owed me a thousand crowns, than that certain great lords were in my debt for an hundred thousand; I should at least be sure that he would pay me to the last *liard;* instead of which, the nobles who are so affable in my shop, repay me only by insults and ill usage at their mansions".

"My father", said the young girl starting, "can it be possible that this morning——"

"This morning, I have cursed more than once my foolish disposition to give credit to the nobility in preference to the commons", said the good man hanging his head, "and if Gandelot had not come forward to my aid, to-morrow would see me ruined".

"How, father, have you not received this sum from the Duc de Bellegarde, or from Madame la Marèchale?"

"Not a crown, not a sous, not a denier from those you mention, Rosette, but fine words, and more frequently insults and threats; I have been obliged to borrow from my gossip, a sum which is owed to me seven times over by these great lords".

Rosette was meanwhile quietly observing the two strangers. The Count de Manle seemed entirely occupied in watching the two apprentices as they carried the money

into the back shop, and the jingle of the coin in the adjoining closet, prevented him paying attention to the conversation. Villenègre alone uttered a few words in favour of his order, but with hesitation, and in apprehension of increasing the ill temper of Rosette's father.

"You are too hard on the people of quality, Master Poliveau, and you forget that you yourself no longer belong to the commons. Meanwhile, believe me, there are amongst the noblesse men of true honour, who will not fail to pay you your principal and interest".

"I have no doubt of it, M. le Marquis", said the good man, bowing and using an ironical tone; "but in order to do so, they must have the disposal of their property, and their fathers and mothers can make them wait awhile for that".

The marquis felt the blow, and bit his lips. At this moment, the Count de Maule, whose attention had been absorbed by the proceedings of the apprentices, determined again to take part in the conversation.

"Let us not misunderstand each other, Master Poliveau", said he, caressing his moustache, "you appear this morning to be in a bad humour, and it is not proper to visit it on the marquis and me. If I repeat your expressions in high circles, evil may come of it to you. As for myself, I wish you to tell me frankly, if you consider me a true gentleman?"

"But—perhaps so", said the alarmed citizen, "I scarcely know you".

"That is all right; but you have also offended M. de Villenègre, my friend, and you must also acknowledge him to be a man of honour".

"I willingly concede it, for I know him much better".

"Well then, in this matter all is settled, and there is no offence", said the count rising, and arranging the waist-belt of his long duelling sword. "It is sufficient for me to have heard you openly declare that you consider us men of honour".

"The one wants to steal his cloth, and the other to steal his daughter", murmured Giles Poinselot to his companion *L'Ebouriffè*.

Poliveau arose.

"Apropos, messieurs", said he, "I have forgotten to inquire what it is that has procured me the esteemed favour of your visit. You, M. le Marquis, may I be informed?"

"But", said Villenègre confusedly, "I was passing, and could not resist the desire of being informed of your good health and that of your amiable daughter".

"A thousand thanks on my own part", said Poliveau roughly, "as for my daughter, permit me to tell you, that you give yourself too much trouble. I have remarked your attentions in my shop, M. de Villenègre, and although I may be an old dotard, I know well that you come not here on account of my bright eyes; and as it would be very unfortunate that it should be for my daughter's, I shall feel truly obliged to you to deprive us, her and myself, of your honourable presence, particularly as they have begun to prate about you in this quarter, and I wish to retain the good opinion of my neighbours".

The young man assumed an aspect full of pride and anger. He was about to break out in resentment, when Rosette passed near him retiring into the interior of the

house, and made an imploring sign. Villenègre became calm as if by enchantment, and saluted her whilst she was retiring; but not to seem to yield to her father's commands by departing at once, he stood proudly near the door as if waiting for the Count de Maule to leave the shop with him.

In the meanwhile, Poliveau had turned to this swaggerer, and put to him nearly the same question as to the marquis.

"As for me, my dear friend Poliveau", said the count with perfect coolness, "I came to buy one hundred ells of cloth, but I have changed my mind since I have observed you so bitter towards the nobility".

"Nevertheless, monsieur——"

"No, no, you are not agreeable to day", replied de Maule rising, "in a few days I shall return with a lackey carrying a bag of one thousand pistoles, and we shall see then if you will be so indifferent". He hoped, perhaps, that the merchant, allured by this intimation, would endeavour to induce him to take the merchandize at once; but Poliveau had been too much exasperated by his fruitless tramp of the morning to fall into the trap. "When you please, monsieur", said he, bowing lower than he had previously done to the count, "I shall be disposed to serve you at all times".

De Maule made a shrug of disappointment.

"Are you coming, count?" asked Villenègre. "I propose that we dine together at the *Pomme d Or*".

"With all my heart, marquis; but you do not know what an agreeable thought occurs to me. To have our friend Poliveau cudgelled by my people"; and the count

burst into a great fit of laughter, as if he had said something particularly exciting.

Poliveau, whose leading characteristic was not courage, and who believed de Maule quite capable of putting his threat into immediate execution, turned pale and retreated a few paces.

"Messieurs", cried he, "no violence! I cannot suppose that I have said any thing that ought to offend you to such an extent".

The young marquis made a dignified gesture. "Fear nothing, Sire Poliveau", said he coldly; "I never for a moment thought of chastising your rudeness. You are under the protection of a young demoiselle whom I respect and honour, and I could not allow any violence to be offered to you".

"And it would not be prudent to make the attempt", said Giles Poinselot, showing himself all at once behind his master, armed with the heavy half-ell, and aided by Guillaume, who brandished the shears.

The marquis only noticed this boast by a look of disdain: the count by a violent fit of laughter; and the two gentlemen left the shop arm in arm before the merchant had recovered from the fright into which this unexpected scene had thrown him.

They had not gone twenty paces, when de Maule, ceasing at once to laugh, said to the young marquis, who was still strongly excited by the recent occurrence: "Ah, Villenègre! I have discovered the truth. You love the little girl, and the little girl loves you. You are a child, and do not know how these adventures are managed. I wish to assist you, that we may be both

avenged on this stupid brute of a trader. This evening the little girl will be in your power".

"This evening!" repeated the marquis, thunderstruck, and staring at his companion.

"This evening. But wait a moment: I must dismiss this rabble, who will rejoin us at the very moment we require them".

At the same time he turned and spoke a few words to his domestics, who instantly dispersed, when he rejoined the young man, who waited with anxiety.

"The gaming house and the dice — have they left you any pistoles?" asked he.

"I have still some crowns in my purse".

"You must lend them to me; I shall pay you to-morrow, for I shall touch a large sum—ten thousand crowns".

"Willingly, but can you tell me——"

"Nothing. Let us to the *Pomme d'Or*, and, provided you allow me to have my own way, I promise that the coming night will give us satisfaction on all this family".

CHAPTER II.

At the period to which the events of our narrative refer, Paris, at night, was not lighted as it is in the present time. Consequently at the close of day, noise and bustle ceased at once; churches and theatres were shut, the citizens remained within their doors, intercourse was completely suspended, except in one or two privileged quarters. From night-fall the city thoroughfares were

infested with thieves, housebreakers and assassins; and if a peaceable trader ventured abroad, it was only on an occasion of imperative necessity, after being furnished with arms for his defence, and a lantern for his guidance.

Exactly as the great bell of "Saint Merry" had tolled the *Angelus*, Poliveau's shop had been closed with great bustle by the porters, and the good man, after satisfying himself that all was right, ascended to the next story, in a large apartment of which his daughter and apprentices were waiting his presence to commence the family repast of the evening. This chamber, which served the double purpose of kitchen and dining room, was spacious, irregular, and its bare walls displayed neither tapestry nor wainscot. The furniture was heavy, old fashioned, and darkened by the joint effect of smoke and time. In a recess an ample sideboard displayed a considerable quantity of pewter plates and dishes shining like silver. In the centre, a long table was laid for supper, with a coarse unbleached table cloth and four covers. The master's place was distinguished by a large easy chair covered with brocade, and by a silver cup of very modest pretension. As to Rosette, there was nothing to mark her place, and it seemed that she was as little accustomed to luxury as any other of the inmates; for the good citizen, as we hear of the tradesmen of former days, would have considered it a matter of conscience that his apprentices should fare equally well as his own child. The table was attended by an old female domestic of a surly disposition, who prepared the family supper. Under a large stone chimney at the end of the apartment a little dog in a niche slowly turned a spit supported on two andirons of about three feet in

height, and seemed lazily to inhale the smell of the crisp roast meat of which he was the guardian. The dull rays which penetrated the yellowish glass of the window constituted the light of this smoky and primitive apartment.

On entering, the good man cast a hasty glance around him to see if every one was at his post, and that each had performed their peculiar functions. Rosette was seated near the window completely absorbed in thought; Guillaume was engaged in arranging the seats around the table—for notwithstanding the paternal conduct of their masters, the apprentices then performed offices of a servile nature; as to the female attendant, the moment Poliveau crossed the threshold of the room she advanced to relieve the turnspit dog of his task, and to arrange on a dish the ample roast that constituted the repast. But the citizen knitted his brows heavily on remarking that Giles Poinselot, the elder lad, was not yet present.

"What is this?" cried he in an exasperated tone. "Must I wait the good pleasure of my apprentices to take my place at my own table? Do they think I am ruined and incapable of asserting a master's rights in mine own house? Where, then, is this saucy spark, Giles Poinselot?"

The loud voice of the good man broke in on Rosette's meditations. She quickly arose: "Give yourself no concern, father; Giles has charged me to excuse him to you; he will not sup with us; he has gone up to his chamber to dress himself, and——"

"And where, then, can this pretty fellow be going at such an hour? Does he take my house for an inn, where the door is open all night? But after all", continued he

in a subdued tone, "let him do as he lists. Very soon, perhaps, I shall have no right to give orders to any one; and let it come soon or slow, what matters it? Let us to table": at the same he pointed to his daughter and Guillaume to take their places. Then raising his hat, he devoutly pronounced a blessing, and the supper commenced.

At first the repast proceeded in silence. Poliveau retained the gloomy and impatient humour of the early part of the day, and Rosette was at no loss for subjects of reflection; as for Guillaume, he seldom spoke, and never in his master's presence unless in reply to a question: so that the conversation could not be very animated between three such persons. Meanwhile when Poliveau had drank two or three cups of generous wine, of which a flagon was placed near him, and of which he made a moderate distribution to his companions, he smiled a little, and remarked that Rosette was not as lively and cheerful as usual.

"What aileth thee, my child?" he asked in a tone of kindness. "Have I frightened thee by my roughness or sad anticipations? What do you wish for? I have had this morning some transactions of a disagreeable nature; but you must not fret yourself on that account; I am far from wishing that my pretty Rosette should grow pale and lose her spirits because her father's affairs are not as satisfactory as they should be".

"It is true, father, these cruel vexations have overwhelmed me", replied the young girl with an effort.

"Come, come, courage, my daughter", answered the good man trying to rally himself; "the danger is not over without doubt, but it is farther from us. Still I tremble

at the thought that if Gandillot had not been able to lend me this day the seven thousand crowns which I was short of in the sum I owe Jacomeny, I, Nicholas Poliveau, master of the draper's company—I, an old magistrate of the city—I, who have attained to such honour and who pass for the most solvent trader of the quarter—I would have been obliged to become bankrupt like a forger or a knave!"

At the same time he swallowed another cup of wine to drown his care, and perhaps to conceal a rising tear; but the young girl observed not his emotion, and she remarked in a tone of sorrow: "Truly, dear father, I cannot comprehend how all these nobles who owe you such large sums can refuse to assist you at your need, without even one single exception".

"Not one—not one, my daughter", said Poliveau striking his pewter plate angrily with his fork at the recollection of the humiliations he had undergone. "One was incapable of receiving me, as he was sleeping off the effects of the previous night's debauch; another was engaged at the tennis court; another was at the king's audience. Some whom I found at home made me the subject of jests or the object of menaces. This one, although possessing a revenue of an hundred thousand crowns, sought to borrow from me twenty pistoles, alleging that he had lost at the gaming table on the previous evening even to his last sous. This other goes farther, and actually assaults me: yes, my child, he has me hunted by his insolent lackeys because I claim what is owing, justly owing to me. I am driven out furious and maddened by such treatment from their mansions and

palaces, and you might perceive how I felt towards the noblesse on my return to my shop. The Count de Manle and the little Marquis Villenègre were there; and, by my faith, they have paid for the others!"

The name of Villenègre seemed to impart new life to Rosette.

"In fact, my father, it appears to me that you have gone too far; for, doubtless, these are two men of distinction, and——"

"Oh, as for this Count de Manle, I do not at all repent of what I have done. I have long suspected that notwithstanding his high title and display, he was no more than a *chevalier de fortune*".

"How, father! a man who goes to court?"

"Child", said the old merchant in a soft tone, "can you be ignorant that, provided a man is equipped with an embroidered mantle and a sword, provided he assumes a lofty carriage, an air proud and overbearing, and calls himself by a high sounding appellation, be it true or false, he may enter the Louvre and have access even to the king's closet? It is a strange age in which we live, my daughter; and nothing resembles more the noble and proud gentleman than the arrant knave and boaster—for one and the other frequent the same places, and display the same manners. As for this Count de Manle, he passes amongst strangers, as he should, for a knowing fellow, and amongst us citizens, for a thorough scoundrel—and I have treated him accordingly".

Rosette did not consider it suitable to detail to her father the narrative of the pet fawn and the other impostures of the character in question; for that purpose she

should necessarily mention the communications of poor Giles, who, for the time, seemed totally out of favour with the irascible old man. She replied timidly and with downcast eyes: "And the other, my father—the young man who accompanied the count? He is of a family high and illustrious——"

"Oh, as for him, he is for the present a fool, and in course of time he will become a knave, not but, as you have just now said, he is of a good extraction. The Duke and Duchess de Villenègre, his father and mother, are persons of wealth and consideration, who possessed great influence at court in the time of the late king; but they have grown horribly avaricious, and the young man, who has a luxurious taste and loves pleasure, is necessitated to contract debts to support his station. On the other hand, it is supposed with good reason that such sharpers and swindlers of rank as this Count de Manle cannot fail of leading him very far. I do not believe him to be yet totally depraved, but with the associates he has chosen, his better feelings, if he has any, cannot resist long, and he will end by polluting himself with every baseness, infamy, and vice, like the other debauchees with whom Paris is infested".

"Believe it not, father", cried Rosette with warmth, "the Marquis de Villenègre will repel bad advice. He is noble, true, and of high principle, and never will stoop to the degradation and vice which you impute to the others".

The good man frowned. Rosette, perceiving that the eagerness with which she defended the young gentleman had awakened the suspicions of her father, became embarrassed and muttered, leaning over her plate:

"Indeed I am very little acquainted with M. le Marquis, and I do not know—I am not aware——"

"You are very little acquainted, Rosette?" replied the merchant in a harsh and menacing tone. "I believe, on the contrary, that you are better acquainted than becometh a modest and prudent girl who knows the distance that separates her from this M. de Villenègre. Meanwhile I no longer repent of having requested him to discontinue his visits. Perhaps it is my own fault", continued he with more mildness and sighing deeply. "Yes, it is I who have left my daughter alone and exposed to the impertinent attentions of a corrupt noblesse, whilst I was endeavouring to sustain my tottering affairs. Yes, perhaps I have no one to blame except myself".

He uttered these words with a broken voice, and a tear started to his eye. Rosette at once perceived his emotion, she rose from table, and rushing towards him with open arms, she exclaimed sobbing: "Pardon, dearest father; reproach not yourself with my levity, I am not guilty——"

"Guilty!" cried the old merchant, to whom this word seemed to impart renewed anger. "And who will dare to affirm that the daughter of Nicholas Poliveau is guilty or culpable in thought, word, or deed? By St. Martin, I would strangle the calumniator; and as for him who would inveigle your affections, I would slaughter him—yes, before God I swear I would slaughter him, even if it involved me but a little later in the fate of a public criminal".

The fearful voice of Poliveau had petrified them with terror. Guillaume, who sat opposite to him, remained with raised arm but without conveying to his mouth the

morsel which he held. The female who attended table, and who usually had no scruple in joining in the conversation of the family, let fall a pewter dish which she was about to place before her master. As for Rosette, she recoiled from her father, and stifled an avowal which was almost upon her lips.

But the good man was as readily calmed as he was excited. On observing the effect he had produced on those about him, he smiled, and remarked, as if ashamed of his excitement: "Truly, I am a fool to allow myself to be carried away, and thus disturb you all, about faults which neither I nor any other person would dream of imputing to my daughter. Come, embrace me, Rosette, and we shall say no more about it; only", continued he in a quick and peremptory tone, after having impressed a kiss upon the brow of the fair girl, "remember that I interdict you from speaking to this Marquis de Villenêgre. If, contrary to my desire, he presents himself at the shop in my absence, the apprentices can receive him suitably; but you must go to your private apartment without addressing to him even a word from the moment you see him. You know I must be obeyed".

The young girl made no reply, and resumed her place. Poliveau was not accustomed to assume towards her such an authoritative deportment, which he reserved for his apprentices and inferiors; but since the affairs of the old magistrate had become involved, his temper had been soured to an extraordinary degree, and the events of the day now drawing to a close had only tended to increase this irritable disposition.

Meanwhile the family meal was just ended, when the

door opened, and by the light of a lamp which the attendant was about to place on the table, for night was falling fast, they beheld Giles Poinselot enter the apartment. An entire change had taken place in his appearance; and one who had seen him some hours previously measuring cloth in his mastrer's shop would never recognize him now, so thorough was the transformation effected by a peruke and the habit of a chevalier. He had a plumed hat, a doublet and trunk breeches of deep green with points of blue satin, and boots with gilt spurs. A large black belt supported his rapier, and a mantle of the same colour as the doublet hung jauntily on one shoulder. Thus dressed and equipped, he might be taken for a young gentleman planning an incognito excursion through the city to indulge in princely pleasure.

Giles advanced with hesitation towards his master, as if dreading to show himself in such guise to the inexorable Poliveau. He stood hat in hand, and was about to speak when the tempest burst forth—

"What is this?" exclaimed the merchant, pushing back his chair as if he beheld some noxious creature before him. "Where the Devil did this masquerader come from? This is no carnival season for draper's apprentices to disguise themselves as courtly lords!"

Giles undoubtedly expected this hurricane, and he endured it with great patience.

"Master, pardon me", said he with downcast looks, "but this attire is necessary for an excursion which I have planned for this very night".

"This night!" replied Poliveau in a voice of raillery, "and how can 'Monsieur le Chevalier' suppose me such a

fool as that I should permit him to pass the entire night abroad?"

"Then", cried the young man joyfully, "you do not expel me from your house, notwithstanding that——"

He checked himself, and directed towards Rosette and Guillaume a look of gratitude.

"Expel you—you?" exclaimed the astonished Poliveau, "but you rave. You, a prudent, well regulated, honest apprentice, without any other fault than not knowing how to content yourself in your proper place! No, no—God keep me from losing you, notwithstanding your foolish notions of pride".

This kindness appeared to touch Giles Poinselot deeply.

"Master", replied he with emotion, "I see that my faults have not been told to you, and I am grateful to Mademoiselle Rosette, and to my poor comrade Guillaume. But I mean not to delude you; and I await your judgment whether I am still worthy of your confidence. This dress which I wear at present has been frequently worn by me without your knowledge: I have wished to play the fine gentleman; I have frequented gaming houses—I have played. I know how strict you are on such subjects, and for a long period my conscience has impelled me to make this painful avowal".

The merchant considered a few moments.

"These are certainly great faults", said he in a grave tone; "and only that you are an orphan without any other kindred than my old correspondent at Sedan, that avaricious uncle who sent you to Paris with a few crowns and a recommendation to me, I would prefer a complaint to your family. But as you are alone in the world, and

have no other protector than myself, you shall escape with a reprimand which I intend to give you at a certain time and place; so that these pranks shall not banish you from my family, provided you promise to cast off these trappings and to content yourself with a habit suitable to your condition".

"Can it be possible", cried Giles, seizing his master's hand and kissing it with gratitude, "my good, my excellent master, you pardon my offence? Oh, I promise you to renounce for ever these silly ideas; I thoroughly perceive that by such means I cannot hope to gain the good opinion of any person. But", he resumed with earnestness, "your goodness stimulates me to accomplish the project I have conceived. Allow me to go forth this night, and to-morrow I shall obey whatever commands you enjoin: I swear it".

"And whither do you wish to go at this hour?"

"I beseech you question me not. Perhaps this night I may have an opportunity of proving my gratitude to you for past favours and present kindness".

"Here is a pleasant adventure!" said the merchant, stamping his foot with impatience; "my apprentice dresses like a gentleman, and speaks like a sorcerer!"

Again he seemed to engage in reflection. Giles, standing before him, anxiously awaited his decision; Rosette and Guillaume scarcely ventured to breathe.

"No", said Poliveau at length firmly; "I ought not to permit a violation of the old established rules of my house. It is a bad omen when old usages are forgotten, and when the master suffers any relaxation of the discipline of his household. Giles Poinselot, either you do not go forth

this evening, or you will return, if you return, no longer my inmate and friend".

"Come what will", said the young man with a sad aspect, "I must support the dreadful consequences of mine own obstinacy".

"Giles, my dear Giles", said Rosette with some emotion, "will you leave us thus, perhaps for some object of little importance?"

"Comrade", growled forth the burly Guillaume, grasping the hand of Poinselot, "it is very true you say you wish to go out; but I do not wish to allow you. You know I am the stronger: I shall thresh you if you persist".

Poor Giles, without replying, raised his hand to his eyes to conceal his tears.

"Let him go", said his master in a tone of bitterness; "he is an ingrate who seeks to abandon me whilst ruin threatens my affairs. He can gain a livelihood anywhere, and has no further need of me. Let him depart: they say that in like manner rats decamp from a falling house. Do not detain him; he is rather slow to quit us as he is not afraid of our misfortune becoming contagious".

"Do not impute to me any such motive, my dear master", cried the young man with earnestness; "it would be my delight to live ever near you, and share your happiness and sorrow, as in days past: but why impose upon my obedience a condition which my conscience forbids me to accede to? Hear me; I will avow it is for you, and to serve you, that I wish to go out at this hour. Inquire not as to my project—I hardly know it myself: but I am convinced that a great misfortune threatens you, and I would avert it at any cost".

"A misfortune threaten us!" exclaimed Rosette in affright.

Giles made no reply, and there was an interval of silence.

They anxiously awaited the decision of the head of the family, who seemed himself to be involved in uncertainty.

"Well", replied he, speaking to the apprentice, "give me only a plausible pretext for this expedition of yours—give me some other grounds for the vague insinuation respecting the misfortunes of which you speak, and respecting the nature of the services you are so willing to render—and I shall allow you to go. I suspect that you ought to have some very strong motive for seeking this permission with such obstinacy. But I have a right to inquire of you an account of your motive, since I am in the place of a father to you".

Poinselot hesitated for a moment.

"No, bourgeois", said he at last with embarrassment; "the reasons which I have for going out would perhaps appear to you frivolous; and, besides, I cannot tell you at all. Have confidence in me, and be assured that in asking this favour, I entertain no improper design".

"Come, we shall say no more", interrupted Poliveau, rising up; "Giles Poinselot, I shall conduct you to the door, and I pray God and His saints to watch over you".

Then, as if these last expressions had awakened in him the religious feelings with which the traders of Paris were at that period deeply imbued, he rejoined with a solemn demeanour:

"Meanwhile, Giles, as you are still my apprentice and inmate, and as I can exercise over you the rights of the

head of a family even until you have passed the threshold of this dwelling, I wish you not to leave until you have discharged the duty of a Christian. This is the usual hour of our family prayers before we retire. Join us for the last time, and may this act of devotion conduce to your advantage! Come", said he, addressing the other persons, and laying aside his hat; "all to your knees; and do you, Rosette, repeat the prayers".

It was the daily custom in the draper's house to have prayer at the conclusion of supper. Nevertheless, the ideas of Rosette and the others were so confused at the time of this duty, that the good man had to repeat his order, and then only was it obeyed. He had already knelt on the floor, his face turned towards an antique crucifix which adorned the chimney piece. Rosette, the apprentices, and the female servant were kneeling near him.

The night was still, and the chamber was dimly lighted by the flickering rays of a lamp and the dying flame that weakly played upon the embers in the hearth. Rosette recited the evening office, but it was evident to her hearers that she did not apply herself to this pious duty with her usual tranquillity of mind and fervency of devotion. Sometimes her memory failed; and often the holy accents issued from her lips indistinct or imperfect. The others made the responses to the ordinary passages, and then to the clear and musical enunciation of the young girl succeeded a low murmur, as the deep voice of the merchant, the quivering tone of the woman servant mingled, with the sonorous and drum-like voices of the apprentices. There was in this religious scene what would raise a smile upon

the lips of the sceptics of the nineteenth century; still it was poetic and of patriarchal simplicity, borrowing an additional charm from the penumbral light of the apartment and the peaceful calm that pervaded the assembled household.

The prayer terminated, and they arose in silence. They looked at each other as if the performance of this duty was expected to effect a change in the intentions of the respective characters. Poliveau turned to Giles Poinselot, who stood sad and motionless at a few paces from him.

"Well, Giles?" said he.

The young man fastened his mantle on his shoulders.

"I attend you", he replied with a stifled voice.

"We part, then", said Poliveau with a sigh. He took the lamp from the table.

Rosette, perceiving that the young man was bent on departing, thought that she was bound to try again some inducement to retain him. She entertained for him all the esteem and regard which his good qualities merited; and although he had never breathed an expression of love, she was well aware of the power she possessed over him. What woman, artless and modest though she be, can be deceived as to the nature of the feelings she inspires?

"Giles", she said with tearful eyes, "in the name of the holy Virgin, reflect on the step you are taking. You have no family, no support in Paris, and you are about to expose yourself by your own indiscretion to all the dangers and risks of an uncontrolled course. I beseech you, renounce this silly plan; if not for your own sake, do so for the sake of my father, who has such need of your services—for my sake—I, who love you as a brother".

"Demoiselle", replied Giles Poinselot, sobbing, "speak not so; for I might remain at your entreaty, and the worst consequences might ensue. I have lingered too long, and whilst I hesitate, they are doubtless plotting against your safety".

"Let him go", replied Poliveau impatiently; "see you not that he is an ingrate?"

Meanwhile L' Ebouriffé, to whom the thought of this separation had never previously occurred, gave himself up to a grief bordering upon distraction.

"It is true then that you wish to leave us", exclaimed he with anger: "bourgeois, suffer him not to pass. Who will tend the shop when Giles is gone? I shall not be able to do anything without him. Yet hold, bourgeois—do you wish me to seize him and take him up to his chamber? I shall do it in an instant, for I wish him not to leave", and spite of his threats, the voice of the poor fellow was lost in his sobs. The others partook of his emotion: Rosette concealed her face in her apron, and the woman servant uttered some faint groans. Giles hastened to put a termination to this scene which was weakening his determination.

"I shall not be long away", replied he with an effort, "if my anticipations are well founded. But time presses. Adieu, demoiselle; perhaps in a short time you will yourself acknowledge the advantage of the sacrifice which I make at present. Adieu, my dear friend Guillaume—we shall soon meet again. Adieu, good old Genevieve; I was a child of this house, and ye loved me as relatives and dear friends would love. And you, my excellent master, my benefactor, hesitate ere you accuse me; soon,

perhaps in a few hours, you will know how much you deceive yourself in reference to me".

"I shall await the proof", said the citizen firmly, and advancing towards the door with the lamp in his hand.

Giles made a last gesture of farewell, and followed Poliveau to the well stair-case which led to the shop. Those who remained scarcely breathed whilst listening to the one who was departing. They almost hoped that the apprentice would change his intention; but soon they heard the turning of the keys and the loud shutting of the door. He was gone.

Some minutes afterwards Poliveau returned into the apartment. He was very pale, and his countenance displayed traces of the violence he had offered his feelings in concealing his mortification. He placed the light upon the table, and seeing the females in tears, and the apprentice Guillaume with his hand to his forehead in an attitude of despair, he said in a curt manner: "Come, let us be calm and say no more about all this. This night walker has not deserved the regrets he has produced: he was a coxcomb and fop, who soon or late would have come to evil".

But, notwithstanding these invectives inspired by his anger, a slight contraction of his features proved that he was not so insensible as he wished to appear; he remained pensive for some minutes.

"You are all overwhelmed", said he with affected indifference: "for my part, I think no more of this prodigal son. It is late; and although a rascally apprentice has left us this evening, it is no reason why we should forget the hour of repose. We cannot rise betimes in the mor-

ning. Notwithstanding we are deprived of this fellow's services, we shall have plenty of business. Genevieve, give us lights. Embrace me, Rosette, and may God grant you a good night".

At the same time he impressed a kiss upon his daughter's brow: each took their lamp and separated, although the hour was not very late.

CHAPTER III.

The apartment of Rosette was on the first floor, beside the family room; and its only window, decorated with a modest wooden balcony, looked upon the street a little above the old pent-house which adorned the shop. This chamber was gloomy and uninteresting, with its large dull tapestries, its canopied bed furnished with curtains of green serge, its presses of oak, its Madonna in wax over the mantelpiece, and its insignificant looking glass: there were to be seen none of those trifling articles which in our times indicate the presence of a young girl of opulent circumstances: all there was grave, and it was easy to perceive that she who occupied it spent in it only the time strictly devoted to repose.

On entering, Rosette hastened to dismiss the old Genevieve without permitting her to perform the accustomed services. Then when the attendant had uttered her final 'good night', and her retiring footsteps were no longer heard through the silent house, the young girl

hastened to lock the door, and casting herself into a large arm-chair near her bed, she sighed heavily.

Doubtless the fatigues, emotions, and annoyances of the day rendered this moment of rest peculiarly pleasant. Nevertheless after a few moments' repose, she started up in fevered haste and drew from her pocket the note which the Marquis de Villenègre had stealthily conveyed to her. It was open, so that it may be supposed that during the day Rosette had found a moment to glance at its contents; still she turned it over and over in her fingers with an air of indecision, but she ended by approaching the lamp and reading it with an attention that indicated the interest it excited.

This letter, written in the inflated style of the period, was nevertheless tender and respectful. The marquis entreated her to vouchsafe only a word in reply, and declared that he would be at the summit of his wishes if the adorable Rosette allowed only a look of compassion to fall upon her unhappy slave. This language strongly contrasting with the insolent and confident tone of the gallants of the period, was precisely calculated to make a strong impression upon a young girl, well-disposed, but a little vain. Accordingly the draper's fair daughter perused with infinite pleasure these lines, in which she imagined she could discover the characteristics of a disposition open and pure as her own. With smiles she weighed each expression, and dwelt upon the length of the communication. At this time all the events of the day disappeared from her memory; she no longer dreamed of the ruin that threatened her father's house; she thought no longer on the mysterious departure of Giles; or on the injunction

she had received to see the marquis no more. She was totally absorbed in this first love letter, which she re-perused with delight.

But soon reflection came to embitter the joy in which she had briefly indulged; Rosette's head drooped on her bosom, the letter slipped from her hand without an effort to retain it, and the silent tears bedewed her cheeks.

"Ah! yes", she indistinctly murmured whilst leaning against her bed, "my father evinces judgment: it is mere folly for a poor maiden such as I am to direct her views so high. What am I in comparison with him? Our claim to nobility, too new and too ambiguous, has only served as a jest to our neighbours. He is young, handsome, wealthy, and amiable; he will be a duke in time; he will have equipages, chateaux, city mansions: and I—oh, Heavens! oh, Heavens!"

She knelt before the waxen Madonna, which, ornamented profusely with spangle and tinsel, surmounted the chimney-piece, and offered up a short prayer. Then she advanced to close the window which had been left open on account of the warmth of the weather.

It was then about eleven o'clock at night, and the most profound silence prevailed in the neighbourhood. The lights had long since been extinguished, and the *Rue de la Tixeranderie* was enveloped in complete darkness. Still when the young girl went to close the window, she thought there was a slight noise outside beneath the balcony; she paused with alarm, and listened attentively, but the noise was so inconsiderable that she supposed she had deceived herself.

All at once resuming courage, she raised her hand to

draw back the thick curtain of serge which was before the window, when the two hinged lattices gently opened and a man muffled in a mantle showed himself outside on the balcony.

Rosette recoiled, mute, pale, and terrified, as if a spectre had met her view, at such a strange and unexpected appearance. Her blood seemed to congeal in her veins. Nevertheless her presence of mind returned, and, persuaded that it could be no other than a robber who had thus attempted to penetrate into the house, she was about to call for help, when the unknown darted into the chamber, cast aside his mantle, and murmured in a stifled voice: "Pardon, pardon, mademoiselle; but I had no other means of obtaining access to you".

It was the young Marquis de Villenègre.

Rosette's surprise and fear, in recognizing him, were not lessened; and the secret affection which she felt for him rather increased the anger with which his effrontery had inspired her. She withdrew with a light step to the extremity of the chamber, and said to him firmly: "Do not advance a step, sir. If you attempt to approach me, I will instantly call my father, who is in the adjoining chamber. Your conduct is disgraceful and unworthy of a gentleman".

It must, however, be acknowledged that the countenance of Villenègre was not of that description entirely to justify this terror. He stood immoveable, his eyes cast down, and trembling. He might be compared to a schoolboy detected by a severe master in committing some flagrant offence, he appeared so awkward and embarrassed.

"Mademoiselle", he stammered, "the love with which

you have inspired me must plead my excuse—my only excuse".

"Retire, sir, retire instantly", said Rosette with much agitation. "Do you not see that your presence at this hour of the night in my chamber may dishonour me—destroy me? Retire therefore at once, and I may then be convinced, for the sake of your own honour, that, in taking this step, you have listened only to the advice of evil counsellors".

"Oh! that is true", exclaimed the young man with vehemence. "It is only now that I perceive the cruel extent of my conduct. I was deceived—I was fascinated. I am about retiring. I now quit you; but, mademoiselle, let me hope that you do not despise me for having thus intruded on you".

His submission and repentance were calculated to lessen Rosette's anger, and she replied in a less severe manner:

"I will not—I ought not to promise anything. From the avowal which you have just made, I recognize the justice of the fears which I have heard expressed regarding you. Beware of Count de Manle. He is a wretch who will destroy you if you follow his advice. But we may be surprised. In the name of God, depart, and I may still retain some portion of esteem for you".

Villenègre threw a glance behind; but, whether he feared the raillery of those who induced him to take this rash step, or hoped to obtain from Rosette a favourable word, of which he might afterwards boast, he neither advanced nor retired.

"Mademoiselle", said he with a little more confidence, "do not thus frighten yourself. There is a ladder against

the wall, and the poor count, of whom you entertain such a bad opinion, is watching in the street with some faithful domestics. In one instant I can rejoin them, without danger either to yourself or to me. Permit me therefore to say——"

"Nothing, nothing", said the young girl with severity. "I ought not to listen to you. My God! Is this the treatment I should expect from you, after your letter—so respectful? I believed you good, honourable, generous—"

"Well, Rosette", interrupted the marquis, "tell me only that you do not hate me, and I will instantly depart".

"Why place me under such an obligation? I may not speak the truth. Retire without any conditions".

"I shall remain then", said the marquis in a resolute tone, at the same time throwing himself into an arm-chair.

After the hesitation which he had at first evinced, Rosette did not expect this stubborn determination.

"What is to be done?—my God, what shall I do?" she murmured. "He has no pity. Well, I shall instantly call for help, and awaken the people of the house".

"To what end?" said Henry.

"My father will come; he is violent; he will kill you".

"Oh, he will compel me to marry you: that is all I wish".

"Marry me?—you, marquis", said Rosette in a tone of involuntary sweetness.

"Why not. I love you".

"But your father—your mother?"

"Oh, they must listen to reason. Besides I shall be one day my own master".

"But your fortune, your rank?"

"When they see you, all will be excused".

Rosette paused a few moments.

"This determination is madness", she replied with emotion; "the distance between you and me is too great to permit of its ever being realized. Go, then, M. de Villenègre; your obstinacy in remaining here must compromise my honour. Nothing can fill up the abyss which separates us. Once more hi—retire; I supplicate you in the name of all you hold most sacred".

Henry de Villenègre was moved by the solemnity of her adjuration and rose.

"Say then that you love me", said he with much warmth.

Rosette was about answering—and probably the avowal so much desired would have been made to him—when loud and piercing cries were heard in the street. The two young people remained immoveable and attentive. The noise appeared to proceed from the street, and a sonorous voice called out—

"Alarm! alarm!—murder!—robbery!"

Similar events were then of common occurrence at night in Paris, the police of which was on a bad footing; but several circumstances seemed to strike the young girl. It appeared that the person who gave the alarm was engaged with several assailants; the voice appeared muffled, and the noise of a struggle between many persons was distinctly heard, and she imagined she heard the voice of Giles Poinselot.

"My God', she murmured becoming pale, while terror nailed her to the place; "what is the matter?"

"It is nothing", replied the marquis with indifference: "merely some poor fellow struggling with the knights of Malta to preserve his purse".

"But they are assassinating a man", replied Rosette, who remarked that the cries which were at first energetic became gradually weaker, and at length resembled low moaning. "For the sake of humanity, sir, go to the succour of the unfortunate man".

"I shall see", said Villenègre advancing towards the balcony.

At this moment a fresh noise was heard at a short distance; the trampling of several horses galloping on the pavement, the noise of arms, and murmurs of voices, came nearer and nearer. The marquis now manifested much uneasiness.

"The plague take these rascals", said he in a low voice; "the cries of the cowardly rogue have attracted the watch. We are lost if the soldiers observe the ladder and those who are guarding it".

Rosette had not sufficient strength to cry out; and it was only by a strong effort she saved herself from fainting. Her heart scarcely beat, and her breathing almost ceased as the trampling of horses approached the house.

"The lamp!—the lamp!" said the marquis, making a sign to Rosette that the light might betray them.

The young girl convulsively seized the lamp, but by a feeling of modesty which survived the annihilation of all her other faculties she abstained from extinguishing it, and succeeded in concealing it behind a curtain in such a manner that the reflection of the light on the glass of the window could not attract the attention of the soldiers of

the watch. Both remained standing opposite each other, pale, trembling, and holding their breath.

There had been for some moments a considerable movement of persons going and coming about the house. Orders were given in a muffled voice, and followed by indistinct oaths. It appeared as if there was a skirmish beneath the window; for the clashing of swords was audible, then persons were heard to retreat precipitately in different directions, and the galloping of horses announced that the soldiers were in pursuit of the fugitives: at last the noise totally ceased, and the neighbourhood became calm and silent as before.

"They are gone", said the marquis after a moment's pause, "and they have undoubtedly discovered nothing. God is my witness that in this dangerous moment I trembled only for you".

"They may return", replied Rosette with feverish agitation. "Take advantage of the moment and fly. The noise of this alarm has undoubtedly awakened my father; and misfortune would fall on both if he met you here".

"I go, Rosette; but will you not at least say to me——"

"I tell you that every word you now utter is unworthy of you", interrupted the draper's daughter with unwonted energy. "Your culpable folly has perhaps already caused the death of several persons, and perhaps my reputation is for ever destroyed. Marquis, will not that suffice you?"

Villenègre could offer no resistance to this natural burst of anger.

"If I have committed a fault, I shall make amends like

a gentleman", he replied in accents of repentance. "I obey you, mademoiselle, and I hope you will never forget it. Adieu".

"Adieu, adieu", she softly murmured.

Villenègre threw his mantle over him and sprang lightly on the window. Poliveau's daughter followed him anxiously with her eyes, and when he had disappeared in the obscurity of the balcony she thought herself saved; but just at the same moment the marquis again drew back the stuff curtains and exhibited a face in which consternation was visible.

"The ladder is no longer there", said he; "the soldiers of the watch or my own friends have undoubtedly carried it away".

This was distracting news to the draper's daughter.

"All is lost!" she exclaimed with anguish. "God has doomed me for my pride and vanity. I can no longer hope for pity or repose".

The sight of her intense grief, of which he was the only cause, made a deep impression on the young gentleman.

"I implore of you, mademoiselle, not to torment yourself in this manner", said the marquis. "The Count de Maule who accompanied me, and some of his domestics, know the situation I am in, and without doubt will quickly return. I believe that even when I went out on the balcony I heard them whispering under the window, but was apprehensive of awakening the people of the house by calling to them. After all", said he resolutely, seeing Rosette still bathed in tears, "I am very active, and to save the reputation of the woman I love and honour I may well risk a leap of twenty-five feet".

Rosette ran to him and held him by the arms.

"I do not wish it — I beg of you not to attempt it", she said with affright. "Think not of it, Marquis; you will destroy yourself. I would rather wait for the wretches you call your friends, if the watch has not taken them, or if they have not played us some infamous trick to revenge themselves on me and my father".

This last supposition, which, from the character of his companion, Villenegre supposed very likely, excited his highest indignation.

"If the villain had this idea", said he, much excited, "if in inducing me to take the step which caused you so much sorrow, he has merely made me an instrument of his rancour to your house, I swear he shall pay dear for it. And however it may be possible: yes, now I think of it, he spoke to me with too much warmth not to have a personal interest in the service which he wished to render me. I must retire—I suspect treason. Mademoiselle, can you supply me with any stuff which I may tie to the balcony, and by means of which I may descend to the ground?"

"It is an inspiration from Heaven", said Rosette running to a chest from which she took some linen.

In a few moments the young people tied together several pieces of strong linen sheets. They worked hard in silence, and were about fastening to the window this novel species of ladder, when the noise of cavalry was heard a second time at the end of the street approaching the house. Undoubtedly the recent alarm which had taken place in this neighbourhood had brought back the watch; and the project of escaping by the balcony had for the present to be abandoned.

Rosette and the marquis still hoped that the soldiers would pass on without stopping, when the loud voice of Poliveau was suddenly heard from an adjoining room and reëchoed through the house.

"Hilloa, Guillaume, Giles!" he cried, forgetting that one of his two apprentices could not respond to his call, "descend quickly—quickly; thieves have forced open the shop. Robbers! thieves!—help!"

A loud tumult was immediately heard on a level with the street, the shop door was opened and several persons rushed out. The soldiers of the watch seeing so many suspected individuals running out of the house and flying with all their speed, galloped after them in pursuit; while the voice which had been heard by Rosette at the first alarm, and which she had taken for that of Giles Poinselot, cried in a feeble tone:

"There they are: come on, gentlemen of the watch—there are the malefactors—follow them!"

During the disorder inside and outside, Rosette trembled and nearly lost her senses, while the marquis displayed a presence of mind of which the poor girl was incapable in such a trying moment.

"The house will be examined, and I must not be found here", said he rapidly. "The shop door is still open, and I can escape under cover of the darkness. Once out of the house, I defy those heavy cavaliers to follow me through the dark and narrow streets of this district: but I am ignorant of the passages inside the house, and I require some information".

"You will cross the dining room", said Rosette, who could hardly speak, "you will then descend the stairs, after which you have only to cross the shop".

"It is well", and he opened the door of the chamber.

"But, Marquis", she stammered at the moment he was about quitting, "do not think of it; you will be confounded probably with the wretches who have robbed my father".

Without answering, the marquis plunged into the darkness of the dining room, and he appeared to have quickly reached the lobby of the staircase. One moment she imagined he was safe, for the soldiers who had pursued the fugitives through the street had neglected to watch the door; but her hope was of short duration. The voice which she had already heard, and which she now recognized as that of Giles Poinselot, was heard immediately under her.

"Help, gentlemen of the watch!" he cried; "hasten to my assistance, or he'll escape!"

Some of the soldiers instantly dismounted and rushed into the shop; then succeeded a struggle which lasted a few moments, and it seemed as if the person attacked had made a desperate defence. All this occurred in the midst of utter darkness, while the watch loudly cried out for lights.

At length Poliveau emerged half clothed from his chamber holding in one hand a lamp which he had succeeded in lighting, and in the other an old pike, being the only offensive weapon he possessed, and descended rapidly to the shop. The moment he appeared the tumult increased, and oaths, exclamations, and lamentations rose together and disturbed the tranquillity of the neighbourhood.

Rosette felt almost annihilated. The anguish and grief which she had suffered for the last few hours had

exhausted her strength. However, when in the midst of the noise and confusion she distinguished the proud and haughty voice of the marquis — when she heard the piercing cries of her father, she could no longer restrain her desire to ascertain the reality of the misfortunes which she dreaded. In a state of trembling agitation she proceeded towards the staircase, and from the upper part of the steps a strange spectacle struck her bewildered sight.

The greatest disorder reigned in the shop, the tables were upset, pieces of cloth and other merchandise were scattered about the floor: the feeble light of a single lamp displayed the divers groups which filled the space. In the centre Giles Poinselot the ex-apprentice sat in an arm-chair, pale, his clothes torn, without hat or wig; his doublet half open exposed to view on his breast a cloth stained with blood, as if he had received a recent wound. In front of him stood a personage clothed in black, with band and mantle, and whom Rosette quickly recognized as Master Defunctis, the *Lieutenant Criminel* of the short robe, celebrated at that period by his exploits against malefactors with whom Paris was then infested: he interrogated the wounded man, who seemed to suffer intense pain whilst giving his answers. At the foot of the stairs, close by the door of the little cabinet in which he kept his money, stood Poliveau in a state of utter despair: his coffers had been forced open, and the robbers succeeded in carrying off the ten thousand crowns which he had borrowed that morning. The Marquis de Villenègre appeared at the other extremity of the shop, near the door, his clothes in rags, his hands tied, and held by two soldiers, but still preserving his habitual haughty demea-

nour. The soldiers of the watch with their cuirasses and polished steel helmets filled up the door, while their horses curvetted and pranced in the dark street.

At this sight Rosette, to save herself from falling, clung for support to the balluster of the stairs—she felt her limbs bending with weakness; she did not, however, comprehend what was passing, and therefore listened mechanically to the words of Giles Poinselot.

"I tell you then, Monsieur le Lieutenant", continued the wounded man, "that from motives which it is useless to mention, I suspected that two gentlemen who came this day to the shop meditated some unworthy enterprise against my master's house".

"Explain your motives", said the magistrate; "you should conceal nothing from justice".

"Well", replied Giles with embarrassment, "I know that one of them, the Count de Maule, was a man of vicious and debauched habits, overburdened with debt, a *chevalier d'industrie*, living by gambling and cheating; I remarked that he watched attentively those who carried in a large sum of money to my master in his presence, that he observed where it was deposited, and that he examined the localities as if to find out the best means of entering the shop. As to his companion——"

At this moment the wounded man looked upwards, and by chance his eyes rested on Rosette, who was standing at the top of the staircase mute and immoveable as marble.

"Well", asked the lieutenant, "did you observe the other gentleman making the same examination?"

"No", said Poinselot with some effort; "I may believe him capable of certain other crimes, but I thought he was

of too high birth to associate with robbers, as his presence here this night proves him to have done".

The Marquis de Villenègre here smiled ironically.

"Continue", said Defunctis.

"From what I had seen", rejoined the apprentice, "I determined to watch the movements of these two gentlemen. I knew where I could find them, and I was anxious to ascertain whether they meditated anything against the happiness or property of my master, Monsieur Poliveau. This evening, therefore, after my work was over, I put on respectable clothes, and requested permission to go out; I was at first refused, and at length I was obliged, in order to enjoy my liberty, to demand my discharge. I proceeded immediately to the tavern where I knew I would meet the two gentlemen. As I expected, they were there, and already clothed in a plain and simple manner quite different from their costume of the morning; shortly after the lackeys of the pretended Count de Maule arrived dressed like himself, as plain citizens, and conversed privately apart. I then began to ask myself why the servants of a proud nobleman should have laid by their liveries and entered into such familiar conversation with their master, if there were not some culpable mystery connected with it; I therefore watched the movements of the masters, their valets, and their accomplices. The night was dark. They all left the tavern, the two gentlemen together, and the others two paces behind them; I followed them. They took the most unfrequented streets and byways, so that I lost sight of them for some moments; having, however, no doubt that they had some design against my patron's house, I came in haste to this

direction. Turning the corner of a street some paces from this, I was accosted by two men enveloped in cloaks, who appeared to be on the watch; I recognized them as the secretary and valet-de-chambre of the count. They at first begged of me very civilly to take another road, giving me to understand that a cavalier of their society was engaged in an affair of gallantry in that vicinity. I had no intention of retracing my steps, but when I perceived a ladder resting against the wall of the house, and several individuals standing under the pent-house, I no longer hesitated in crying out and giving the alarm.

"The rascals who were on the watch threw themselves on me, and endeavoured to prevent me from crying out. I drew my sword and commenced fighting with both, still loudly calling out for help, when one of the party at the pent-house, whom I recognized as the Count de Maule, quickly approached me and gave me a thrust of his sword in the breast. I fell in a swoon. The watch just then arrived, and seeing that I gave some signs of life, they brought me to you, sir, for the purpose of giving you what information I could in this matter. I am grateful for the assistance you have rendered to me: you see it has been efficacious.

"On coming to myself, I learned that more of the malefactors had been arrested. I then begged of you to send the watch once more to this place for fear the robbers might return to the charge, and undertook myself to accompany you notwithstanding my weakness, in order to direct your search; my anticipations did not deceive me, and then the arrival of the public force compelled the thieves to fly".

This long narrative which explained so clearly all the events of the night, nearly exhausted the wounded man; his head fell backwards as if he were overwhelmed with grief, and his eyes were half closed. The magistrate therefore desisted from pressing him with further questions, and turning towards the Marquis de Villenègre he signed to those who guarded him to permit him to approach.

"Monsieur le Marquis", said he with gravity, "I mean, however, if the title belongs to you——"

"The title is mine", said Villenègre with all the haughtiness of a gentleman of that period, "and I shall not suffer any person to dare doubt my claim to it".

The magistrate gave a slight inclination of his head. "Be it so", said he coldly. "But you have heard the declaration of this apprentice—do you deny so far as it concerns you that it is true?"

"I neither deny nor affirm anything", replied the young man in a high tone; "but I know well, Monsieur le Lieutenant Criminel—I mean, if the title belongs to you—that you will have to pay dear for your insolence this day towards a gentleman who took it into his head to divert himself at the expense of an old shopkeeper. Chavagnac, Dumont, and crowds of others who belong to the court, have committed other follies without the watch or the officers of the Prevôt interfering with them. My family is powerful, and you will see the consequence of treating as a robber the son of the Duke de Villenègre".

The lieutenant appeared somewhat discouraged at the air of assurance assumed by the prisoner. More than one magistrate had been displaced and punished at this period

for having done his duty in opposition to certain young turbulent noblemen who fancied they had permission to do whatever they pleased.

He, however, concealed his personal inquietude, and replied with dignity: "I shall render an account of my conduct to those who have a right to inquire into it; but if certain young courtiers escaped punishment for some trifling offences, it does not therefore follow and it should be well known that no person is above the law. Let me have no tricks or evasion, Monsieur de Villenègre, nor attempt to affect insolence, which all persons should avoid before justice. We are not now inquiring into a nocturnal broil in a gambling house, of a cloak carried off, or anything of that nature. A shop has been broken into, a robbery of ten thousand crowns has been committed, an apprentice has been severely, perhaps mortally wounded, and you who are found, we may say, in the fact, fancy that you can escape by declaring the illustrious name of your family. No, no, Monsieur le Marquis, if you are guilty justice must be done; however", he added in a milder tone, as if correcting himself, "I shall feel most happy in finding you innocent, particularly as I have the honour of being intimately acquainted with your father, my lord duke, who will be plunged into deep affliction by this sad event".

The self-confident manner of the marquis appeared for an instant to waver. Rosette descended a few steps hesitating and exhausted, while her eyes were fixed on the stern countenance of the magistrate, who had just pronounced these severe words.

During this examination the unfortunate Poliveau

moved backwards and forwards, and in his despair exclaiming: "O my God!—my God! why this last and terrible stroke? I am lost!—dishonoured!—ruined! And my daughter, what will become of her?"

These touching and melancholy ejaculations fell upon the ears of Rosette without reaching her heart. All her thoughts were centred in the young marquis, one word from whom might destroy or save her.

"Monsieur le Marquis", rejoined the lieutenant in a more insinuating tone, "it is repugnant to my feelings to believe that a young man of your high birth should be guilty of so mean, so base a crime. I suspect that your presence here may be attributed to another motive. Pray give me some plausible explanation—privately if you wish—and I shall set you at liberty, and promise you the most profound secrecy".

"And what motive but that of stealing my money to satisfy his vicious passions, could have brought him to my house?" cried the old draper with renewed grief and anger. "But what do you here?" he exclaimed in wild accents. "This man is guilty. Conduct him to prison. He is a wretch that has ruined me. I will bear witness against him. Is not that sufficient? Monsieur Defunctis, you are not usually so tardy in performing your duty".

Notwithstanding these energetic exhortations, the lieutenant seemed to entertain strong doubts of young Villenègre's criminality, and perhaps was not displeased at their appearing to force him from his hands. Still he felt anxious to reconcile his love of justice with the respect due to the high rank of the accused.

"Silence, friend Poliveau", said he gravely. "We

must not remember our friendly meetings in the town hall while I am exercising my official functions. And you, sir", he continued, addressing Villenègre, "recollect that the criminal court, should you be sent there, may be much less disposed than I am to find you innocent. Speak, therefore: were you the accomplice of those who committed the robbery?"

The marquis made no answer; while Rosette, who had slowly descended the stairs, placed herself before him without any one observing her presence.

"Giles Poinsclot", said the lieutenant to the wounded man, who seemed to have regained a little strength, "did you not tell me in your examination, that Master Poliveau has a daughter with whom one of these gentlemen was in love?"

All eyes were turned towards the apprentice, who murmured, apparently in much pain:

"Do not question me; I know nothing; I am not aware".

But the magistrate quickly perceived his hesitation and his repugnance to give any explanation on the subject, and pressed him more strongly.

"Young man", said he, "conceal nothing from me. This matter is of the highest importance; and if you know anything of a private nature relating to the Marquis de Villenègre, I adjure you to tell it, in the name of God and of your conscience—in the name of justice and of truth, in order perhaps to avoid greater misfortunes".

"Well", rejoined the wounded youth in a low and stifled voice, inaudible to those at the extremity of the shop, "I am satisfied that the Marquis de Villenègre

loves my young mistress, and everything induces me to believe that she loves him; and therefore, as the truth must be told", said he sobbing, "I admit that my jealousy, as well as my master's interest, induced me to watch on this evening the movements of the young gentleman and his accomplices".

The lieutenant, with a satisfied smile, now felt he was approaching the truth, so far as regarded the marquis, and it was already quite evident that the worthy magistrate, in spite of his strict probity, had no wish to make powerful enemies among the prisoner's relations.

"Thus, then", rejoined he in a significant tone, "it may not have been impossible that an intrigue was carried on between——"

"Giles Poinselot, notwithstanding the services which he has this night rendered me, lies like a scoundrel, if he dares assert that", cried Poliveau with violence. "It is not enough that I have lost in this fatal night my fortune, my credit, my long established reputation for integrity; but that I must yet be assailed in what I hold dearest to my heart—the honour of my only daughter".

Defunctis imposed silence on the unfortunate old man, and proceeded to put fresh questions to Giles, when the prisoner advanced proudly into the centre of the group.

"It is useless that any argument should take place on this subject", said he in an easy, confident voice, which formed a marked contrast to his timidity before Rosette. "You may do what you will with me; but I will never consent to save my rank as a gentleman by destroying the reputation of a pure and irreproachable girl. Let there be an end to this, gentlemen. As I have been found in

the company of those who robbed M. Poliveau, you have a right to suppose me an accomplice. I thank Monsieur le Lieutenant for his good will towards me, but I will not extricate myself from danger by dastardly subterfuge".

Rosette sank on a seat half fainting.

"How he loves her!" murmured the poor apprentice, as his head sank on his breast.

"The youth has at least some noble blood in his veins!" cried Poliveau with energy; "he would not save himself by an act of meanness".

The magistrate seemed disappointed at seeing Villenègre disdainfully turn away from the path he had opened for his escape. He deemed it, however, his duty to point out to the prisoner the terrible consequences of his avowal.

"A foolish generosity perhaps blinds you, Monsieur le Marquis", said he in an almost affectionate tone; "I implore of you to think of the sorrow which this adventure will cause to my lord duke your father, and to the duchess your mother, of whom you are the idol. I beg of you, while there is yet time, to retract the avowal you have just made".

Villenègre still remained silent. Perhaps the recollection of his family which the officer had evoked, had agitated him too powerfully to permit him to speak without betraying his emotion; but Defunctis guessed the cause, and continued in a lower tone:

"Think, I beg of you, Monsieur le Marquis, what awaits you if you persist in not defending yourself. You will be tried and condemned; your escutcheon will be publicly broken by the executioner; your sword and your

spurs will be torn from you as an unworthy knight; and you will be sent to spend the remainder of a life, which otherwise might be so happy, among the galleys. Your family, I know, has powerful friends, but it has also powerful enemies, among whom is Madame la Marechale. You will not be saved. Recollect Beaumanoir, the Baron de Beauveau, and many others. I implore of you to think of all this, and to bear in mind that the reputation of a little coquettish citizen is not to be compared to the honour of an ancient and illustrious family".

Rosette, who was concealed in the shade not two paces from the speaker, had heard all, and watched with anxiety the movements of M. Villenégre. She saw him bend his head, and draw his hand over his forehead, covered with a cold perspiration. She fancied he hesitated: she trembled with agitation: but at the same moment the marquis, recovering himself, exclaimed with a firm voice:

"I will answer before my judges: at present I have nothing more to say".

"Sergeant of the watch", said the lieutenant with a sigh, "conduct this gentleman to prison. Let his obstinacy fall on his own head".

This order put the whole assembly in motion. The lieutenant raised his eyes to Heaven, as a testimony of the inability of his efforts; he then gave directions in a low voice to secure Poliveau's shop from any further attack, and prepared to depart. The soldiers of the watch advanced to seize the prisoner, and already the clashing of arms and the trampling of horses announced the commencement of the march, when Rosette by a sudden

and unexpected movement darted towards the door at the moment the marquis was about quitting it with his guards, and addressing the lieutenant in a firm voice said:

"One moment yet, Monsieur le Juge. You do not know all the truth; I do, and I have the courage to tell it".

The unexpected apparition of Rosette—her animated features—her action, full of authority—seemed to stupify the assistants. The magistrate, expecting some important relation, countermanded the guards, who were already dragging off the prisoner.

"What have you to do here, my child?" said Poliveau. "Is it necessary that you should witness the greatest misfortune that has happened to me since the death of your poor mother?"

"I came to prevent injustice", she replied. "Father, we will hereafter weep over your misfortunes, but at this moment my conscience compels me to render homage to truth".

"My God! what is she going to say?" cried Poinsclot, trying to recover himself notwithstanding his wound, at the same time fixing on her his large haggard eyes.

Poliveau stood petrified with astonishment.

"Speak, Mademoiselle", said the magistrate; "what do you know?"

Rosette remained a moment silent, as if the violence of her feelings had sealed her lips.

"To what purpose do you remain here?" cried the marquis, making a movement to leave. "Do you not perceive, Lieutenant, that the melancholy events of

this night have turned the head of this poor young girl?"

"No, no, sir; listen to me", cried Rosette with vehemence, at the same time seizing the magistrate's cloak, as if apprehensive he would escape. "I know—I am certain that Monsieur de Villenègre took no part whatever in the robbery that has been committed".

"Are you quite certain of that, Mademoiselle?" asked the magistrate. "Where, then, was the marquis when your father's shop was forced open?"

"He was—" stammered the girl, "he was—in my chamber".

The deepest silence for a moment followed this extraordinary announcement; suddenly the old draper rushed towards Rosette, and seizing her violently by the arm cried out vehemently—

"She lies!—believe her not! She loves this young man, and she wishes to save him; for that she does not fear to dishonour her father—to dishonour herself. She lies!—she lies! I assert it. Come, return", added he, endeavouring to drag his daughter towards the staircase; "you have spoken enough of foolishness for one day. And you, Monsieur Defunctis", he continued, turning towards the officer of justice, "you have been my companion—my friend, in former days: forget what this wench has said: when young girls attempt to meddle in serious affairs they speak at random—right or wrong. Think no more of it; I will punish her as she deserves, I promise you".

In speaking in this manner the unfortunate citizen assumed an appearance of severity, which is generally

adopted by fathers in the presence of spoiled children. But Lieutenant Defunctis did not appear disposed to receive so lightly the deposition of Rosette.

"I am vexed to be obliged to contradict you, Monsieur Poliveau", he said, "but you must permit your daughter to have full liberty to speak before me".

"But I swear to you she lies", cried the draper in a paroxysm of grief and anger. "She does not know what is passing: she does not know what she has said. A man was concealed in her chamber!—a young gentleman!—and that even when my house was being robbed, my servants wounded, even myself reduced to misery—to bankruptcy—to infamy! Can that be probable? Is it not absurd? I tell you it is a lie to save a fop. Tell her to give proofs of what she advances: I defy her to give any proofs".

He then burst into a laugh—the laugh of an idiot—which drew tears from the bystanders; Defunctis however concealed his feelings in order to continue the investigation.

"Giles Poinselot", he said to the wounded man, whose despair was hardly less than Poliveau's, "what do you think of the statement of this young girl?"

"Alas! she can say nothing but the truth", replied the young man in a low voice; "and what I most dreaded has taken place".

"But the proofs!" roared the draper "ask him for his proofs!"

"Dear father", cried Rosette, "do not rashly accuse me: I swear before God that I am innocent of any crime, and I therefore obey the dictates of my conscience. You

have said", she continued, turning towards the magistrate, "that the reputation of a coquettish citizen, obscure and unknown, is not to be compared to the honour of an illustrious family; but the Marquis de Villenègre, by a feeling of generosity which I appreciate, prefers the reputation of the poor citizen to the splendour of his spotless escutcheon. On my account he would sacrifice his name, his rank, his liberty—perhaps his life; I will not permit this sacrifice. I therefore now declare that the gentleman at present before you introduced himself by means of a ladder into my chamber against my will, and that he remained there all the time occupied in committing the robbery; the ladder having been carried away at the first alarm, he could only escape at the moment the robbers were about quitting the shop. And if you require proofs of what I advance, you will find the marks of Monsieur de Villenègre's feet on my window, and his cloak is still on a seat adjoining the fireplace".

While she continued speaking the countenance of Poliveau assumed a more frightful expression; but when it came to the proofs which so clearly established the correctness of her testimony, he was seized with a sudden transport of fury, and sprang on his unfortunate daughter apparently determined to strangle her.

"And she did not cry out—she did not call for help!" he exclaimed, grinding his teeth. "Miserable creature!"

The guards promptly seized him in order to prevent him from committing any act of violence.

"Take care of this poor man", said Defunctis with evident satisfaction. "And sergeant", he continued, addressing the officer of the watch, "proceed to the

chamber of this young woman in order to ascertain the truth of her statement".

"Father—dear father", cried Rosette falling on her knees before him, "I implore you, dear father, not to curse me; I am innocent".

But the old man would not listen to her, and continued shouting and struggling amongst the robust men by whom he was surrounded.

Villenègre who was now permitted to enjoy a little more liberty, approached her, and in a voice of deep emotion said:

"Unfortunate girl, what have you done? I only am guilty—why therefore should you suffer? Would it not have been better to leave me to my fate? I felt certain that with my powerful interest——"

"Leave me, sir", interrupted the young girl, repulsing him with modest dignity; "we owe nothing now to each other: at present I belong entirely to this unfortunate old man, whose latter days you have empoisoned".

The marquis was about replying, when the sergeant of the watch returned after having finished the examination upon which he was ordered. He stated that he had seen on the window the marks indicated by Rosette, and he also brought back the cloak of Villenègre, as well as the remnants of linen which the young people had tied together to serve as a ladder. These proofs at once determined Monsieur Defunctis".

"The truth", said he, "is now quite apparent. A feeling of combined delicacy and generosity has induced Monsieur de Villenègre to confess himself an accomplice in the robbery. Those who are really guilty—namely, the

Count de Maule and his servants—must be arrested and punished: you may depend I will catch them. In the meantime", he continued, approaching the young prisoner and gently untying the cords by which he was secured, "you are free; and I hope you will represent to your honourable parents the zeal and anxiety——"

But Villenègre heeded him not; the tears which the poor girl still kneeling continued to shed made a deeper impression on him than his liberty. He advanced towards Poliveau, and addressing him with the most profound respect said:

"I implore of you, sir, to moderate your anger, and not to curse your unfortunate daughter. I declare on my conscience and on the honour of a gentleman that Mademoiselle Rosette has done nothing unworthy of your love and affection. I entered her chamber by surprise, and convinced by her remonstrances of my impropriety, I was about departing when the noise in the street and the sudden disappearance of the ladder prevented me from carrying out my intention".

These explanations only exasperated the unhappy father.

"Listen to him—the handsome spark—the courteous knight—the defender of afflicted damsels", he cried with bitter irony. "He gives us his word as a gentleman—oh, cursed be all who ever bore the title for the shame and misfortune of honest people: one steals my money, another robs me of my daughter; between them they divide the property of the poor trader! One forces open my door—the other my windows; one carries off my coffers, the other deprives me of my honour! Wretches!

wretches! And dost thou believe", turning towards the marquis, "because thou consentest, in order to deceive me, to pass for a robber, that I will not accuse you of perjury when thou affirmest her innocence? No, no—thy presence here dishonours her. She is thine; take her: demon, seize the soul thou hast damned! What could I do with such a miserable sinner on my dying bed? I will no longer look on her. Depart from this: carry her away, or I will instantly destroy her!"

"My father! my good, my ever dear father!" cried Rosette throwing herself at his feet, "do not crush me with your anger and contempt—do not turn from me—oh, do not thus drive me away. I swear by the Blessed Virgin and by the memory of my dear mother, whom you so tenderly loved, that I do not deserve your hatred".

The father repulsed her with his foot with a gloomy and wild determination.

The marquis was about raising his voice, but Defunctis signed to him to remain silent, and turning to the unfortunate old man said in an authoritative tone:

"What is the use of this obstinacy, Sire Poliveau? How can a man of probity and common sense, as you have hitherto shown yourself, give way to such unseemly passion? Come, come", he continued in a milder tone, taking Poliveau's hand which he shook cordially, "it is not the magistrate that is speaking to you, it is your gossip Defunctis—your old friend of the Hotel de Ville. Come, rouse yourself; your misfortunes are undoubtedly great, but they are not irreparable. You have been robbed of a large sum of money it is true, but you have credit, you have friends, and you will retrieve all. As to

your daughter, is it not unjust to make her responsible for the giddy acts of a young cavalier, who without her knowledge introduced himself into her chamber? — as she swears that she has nothing to reproach herself with, and as the Marquis de Villenègre on the honour of——"

The trader listened to the first part of this remonstrance rather patiently, but when the lieutenant undertook to defend his daughter his anger broke out with renewed violence.

"Do not speak to me of her", he exclaimed; "she deceives us—she lies! If she did not love this fop—may the Lord confound him!—above all things, would she have sacrificed for his sake her father's honour and her own? I tell you this is an abominable creature! I detest her, and I will kill her if she is not taken from my presence".

Every one remained silent. The magistrate felt that in his present state of exasperation all remonstrance would be useless, and appeared anxious that some one would put an end to this deplorable crisis, when Poliveau suddenly addressed him in a comparatively mild and even beseeching manner.

"You have recalled to my memory, Monsieur Defunctis, our ancient friendship in happier times; well then assist me now in extricating me from the most frightful situation in which an unfortunate man was ever placed. Listen: I am ruined—dishonoured; to-morrow, perhaps, the officers of the law will come and carry away all that I have; I will be declared bankrupt—infamous, and my previous honour and reputation will only add to my misfortune. Under such afflicting circumstances life is a burden to me;

and I may be tempted to take a horrible revenge on her who has caused all my misfortunes. Defunctis, my friend, save me from this temptation—preserve me from the crime of shedding my own blood. Bring away this odious woman with you: you are a prudent and respectable man, and may be well trusted with such a mission. Bring her therefore away with you lest she might follow her seducer, for she belongs to him—he may claim her: let her depart—let her depart instantly, for if she passed one night under the same roof with me I feel I could not conquer my horrible intention".

While pronouncing these last words there was a savage energy in the look, gesture, and expression of the old man that terrified the bystanders: none doubted that he was capable of realizing his threats if he was afforded the opportunity. Rosette alone appeared unmoved by his frightful delirium; she arose, walked directly to her father, and with extraordinary resignation said:

"Well, here I am, father, kill me—am I not yours? are you not the master of my life? What are all these strangers doing in your house? What keeps them here? Retire, gentlemen', she exclaimed in a firm voice, "your duty is now finished. By what right do you interfere between a father and his daughter? Fear nothing on my account; I will soon convince him that I deserve neither his hatred nor contempt; and even should he fulfil his threat, I would not complain. I would rather die than live with his hatred: my death may expiate in his eyes the faults of which he accuses me—and he may, perhaps, weep for me".

"She dares me! listen to her—she dares me!" cried

the unfortunate trader, who from the excitement of his delirium was incapable of appreciating the affecting confidence of his daughter.

Villenègre now approached the lieutenant, whom he addressed warmly but in a low voice. The magistrate nodded his head.

"Mademoiselle", said he gravely, taking Rosette by the hand, "it is quite useless to attempt to soften your father at present. He must be allowed time and reflection. To-morrow probably he may be more calm. In the meantime permit me to conduct you to my house. I will confide you to the care of my wife, who will show you all the attention of a mother; or, should you prefer seeking an asylum in the convent of *l' Ave Maria*, the superioress of which is one of my relations, you can do so. I also think it would be more prudent no longer to irritate your father by your useless determination.

"I will not quit him", cried the poor daughter with vehemence: "I never will abandon him. Who will console him? who will love him?"

"I will", ejaculated Giles Poinselot in a feeble voice.

Villenègre approached the young girl to add his entreaties to those of the magistrate, but she repelled him with a proud and angry look.

"And by what right, sir", she asked, "do you come to advise me? Is it because I am suffering the penalty of your unworthy conduct, that you arrogate over me an authority which I totally repudiate?"

The young man assumed a noble position, and replied in a voice that could be heard by all present:

"You ask me by what right I interfere. By the right

conceded to the guilty of repenting and expiating their faults—by the right exercised by all who have committed acts of imprudence, of making reparation — and if that does not suffice, by the right which a husband should have in watching over his wife; for I call on all here present to witness, on my honour!—on my faith!—as a gentleman! I swear never to have any other wife than this unfortunate girl, whose honour I have compromised by an act of thoughtless and inconsiderate levity".

On hearing this promise so solemnly pronounced, the magistrate shook his head as if in doubt, while Poliveau gave vent to a loud burst of derisive laughter.

The lieutenant bowed his head respectfully, and was about taking Rosette's hand; but she resisted with all her strength, crying out in a thrilling voice: "Never! never!"

"Ah! ah! she will not be a marchioness!" cried Poliveau with a maddened laugh. "She must be forced, the sweet good creature! Come along. Lay hold of her. She will reward you all when she is a duchess; and I—I —will be most grateful".

"Father! father!" cried Rosette, while Defunctis tore her away in spite of her resistance, "do you then abandon me in this cruel manner?"

She was about disappearing in company with the lieutenant and the marquis, and the soldiers of the watch were already mounted, when Defunctis, stopping on the threshold of the door, said:

"Sire Poliveau, when your heart awakens to its duty, you will come and ask your daughter from me".

The old man rose on his feet, and stretching his hand towards her, cried with a voice of thunder:

"May the flames of Hell——"

But he did not finish the malediction, and fell exhausted on the disappearance of his well beloved daughter. On recovering his senses, he was still in the shop seated in a large chair. Guillaume and Genevieve were at each side of him, evincing the utmost care and anxiety for his comfort. Before him on another chair sat Poinselot, equally exhausted, and suffering more than his unfortunate master. All the other personages had disappeared, and nothing was audible through the half-opened door but the measured steps of the sentinel, who had been placed there by the lieutenant to prevent any renewed attempt of the robbers. A feeble ray of dawning sunshine penetrated through the window over the door, which rendered more dim and pale the light of the lamp still burning on the counter, and a sad silence reigned in the spot so full of excitement and animation some hours before.

The poor old man raised himself with an effort, looked wildly about him, and suddenly applied his hand to his forehead, as if he had received a grievous wound. His recollection appeared, however, to return; for he bowed down his head, and burst into tears.

The assistants carefully avoided interrupting his grief, but they wept with him. He shortly again seemed to recover himself, and examined one by one the persons of those who were present.

On recognizing Genevieve and Guillaume, he made a mute and affectionate sign, as if to thank them for their care; but when his eye fell on the person of Giles Poinselot, who seemed to wait with anxiety the effects of the

recognition, he rose up, and staggering rushed towards him with open arms, crying:

"Giles! my poor Giles! you have then come back!"

They embraced each other, and wept.

"Master!" said the wounded youth with an air of melancholy satisfaction. "You have no objection that I should remain here? You are no longer angry with me? You will not turn me away?"

"I angry with you! I turn you away! while you are yet covered with the blood you have shed in my service! But I no longer love. You are now the only person on Earth whom I esteem. While every one slept—while I even slept myself, you—aye, you kept watch over my fortune and my honour; you, whom I had rejected, turned away, and accused of ingratitude. When robbers and scoundrels succeeded in getting into my house, you were on the threshold to defend it, and, like a faithful dog, you shed your blood on giving the alarm! I turn you away! But you are no longer my lodger; you are no longer my apprentice; you are my best beloved son!"

"Master", said the wounded youth timidly, "you have another child, and——"

"Speak not of her", cried Poliveau with violence; "speak not of her, if you wish I should live. As for you", he continued, turning to Guillaume and Genevieve, "recollect that I have no daughter—that I never had one; and if either of you ever attempts to mention her name before me——"

At this moment his eyes fell on the place which Rosette usually occupied in the shop. Her chair, her workbasket,

her fare, still remained there, as if awaiting her return. The sight of these objects deeply affected the poor man, and he fell back into his seat, covering his eyes, and sobbing bitterly.

"He will pardon her perhaps", murmured Giles, looking at Guillaume. "But ruin and dishonour have nevertheless fallen on the house. We must, however, all do our duty".

CHAPTER IV.

Little remains at the present day of the ancient quarter of the Temple, such as it appeared a couple of centuries back. All the space actually comprised between the *Boulevard*, *la Rue de la Corderie* and *la Rue du Temple* then formed a vast enclosure, which at first belonged to the Order of the Templars, and afterwards, from the reign of Philip le Bel, became the property of the Knights of Malta. This district was formerly surrounded by walls and ditches, flanked by towers, and furnished with drawbridges, like a regular fortification. But, at the period of our story, these threatening ramparts had partly disappeared, and in their place several houses had been erected. The fortified wall, however, still remained, with its turrets and bastions, adjoining *la Rue du Temple*, and close to the principal entrance.

This entrance was situated in a deep recess between the walls of the hotel of the grand prior, nearly opposite the *Rue des Fontaines*, and was sunk under an ancient and

lofty building inhabited by archers in the service of the prior. A certain number of these kept guard there by day and night, to protect the privilege enjoyed by all who sought the asylum.

The interior of this vast sanctuary presented to the eye an assemblage of wooden houses, for the most part old and dilapidated, huddled together without order. Several of these houses however, isolated from the others, and of a more modern appearance, were surrounded by well cultivated gardens, and but for the niggardly quantity of air and space allowed them, they might have been taken for handsome villas. Two or three high and lofty edifices towered above the houses and trees; those situated at the corner of *la Rue de la Corderie*, formed the vast and noble hotel of the grand prior, a portion of which still remains. At the bottom of the principal square, then properly called the Temple, frowned an old Gothic tower used as a prison by the knights. To the right of the extremity of the prior's garden might be seen the lugubrious monument so celebrated as the Tower of the Temple. It was a square edifice, flanked by four enormous towers dark and sombre, with iron barred windows nearly impervious to the light of day, and whose pointed tops seemed almost lost in the clouds. This fortress was built in the thirteenth century by brother Herbert, treasurer to the Templars, to secure the archives of the order; at a later period the kings of France deposited their treasures in it when setting out on distant wars; and at the period of which we are speaking it contained the archives of the knights of Malta. But it is well known that the history of the Tower of the Temple does not stop here, for the

unfortunate Louis the Sixteenth waited for five months within its gloomy walls the terrible sentence which the Convention ultimately pronounced against him.

The extraordinary combination of historical monuments and feudal buildings, mixed up with the unpretending village-like appearance of the houses, and the magnificent trees by which they were enclosed, imparted a marked and distinctive peculiarity to the neighbourhood: even its inhabitants did not altogether resemble those of the other districts of Paris, and might fairly be divided into two separate and distinct classes; one portion were sombre, morose, and discontented; the other gay, lively, and fond of excitement. The former, with their heads bowed down, as if apprehensive of being recognized, moved quietly among the houses; while the latter, whose better feelings had become blinded, roared out snatches of bacchanalian songs, and got drunk in the taverns of the asylum. During the continuance of fine weather one class occupied seats in the principal square, melancholy and pensive, their minds apparently dwelling on past happiness; while the others played gaily at ball, nine pins, quoits, and other games. In short, all ranks and conditions of men appeared to be represented by the variegated groups which crowded the precinct of the Temple. There might alike be seen young and dashing gentlemen clothed in silken doublets, and poor wretches covered with rags; there were soldiers, citizens, lawyers, and writers, each easily distinguished by his characteristic taste, manners, and costume. It was, in short, an abridgment of a city, and equally marked by the same mean intrigues, petty passions, and love of scandal.

All the inhabitants, however, of this sanctuary—soldiers, citizens, and gentlemen—were there kept together by one bond of unity: all were equally bankrupts or insolvents; all equally took refuge in this obscure corner of Paris from the pursuits of bailiffs, or the exactions of tax collectors. The Temple was then what Belgium or England now is—an asylum for those who did not wish to face their creditors.

Such were in effect the privileges which this ancient district enjoyed. It is well known how many jurisdictions formerly existed in Paris: one secular, such as those of the prevôt and the bailiff, the other ecclesiastical, such as those of the Abbé de Saint Germain de Prés, and of the chapter of Notre Dame: jurisdictions in fact which in proportion as they increased caused mutual obstruction, and prevented the prompt repression of crime and arrest of offenders. The power which the Grand Prior of Malta exercised in this asylum was derived from the Grand Master of the Templars, who formerly was judge of the higher and lower courts of the territory belonging to the corporation of which he was the head. The knights o Malta, like all other lords of the high justiciary of Paris, were at all times most jealous of their authority, and no arrest for debt could be made within the privileged precincts except by an officer of my lord the grand prior; but as my lord and his order found it more profitable to preserve the Temple as an asylum, there was no instance on record of their having ever given authority to any myrmidon of the law to violate the sanctuary: and this state of things continued up to the revolution of 1789, at which period all these peculiar courts and privileges were abolished.

Although the art of getting rich by becoming bankrupt was not brought to a state of perfection in the beginning of the seventeenth century, still we cannot say that all the inhabitants of the Temple were reduced to poverty. On the contrary, there were then in it as many wealthy individuals as in any other quarter of Paris, and certain debtors were so thoroughly acclimated that they would not willingly quit it for any other residence. The traders sought it as a refuge to escape from the disgrace of the pillory and the *bonnet vert*, by which bankrupts were then distinguished; and many of them erected shops and carried on their business within the boundaries with as much liberty as in any other part of the city. There certain gentlemen who had not sufficient credit to prevent undue interference with their liberty, fought, gambled, and intrigued, as at *Cours la Reine* or the *Place Royale*. High play was carried on; a joyous life was led; in brief, the little kingdom of the Grand Prior of Malta presented an air of security, richness, and gaiety, which was pleasant to behold.

It is true that, during the day, with the exception of Sundays, none of the inhabitants could quit the sanctuary without running the risk of falling into the hands of their creditors. The small brook which intersected *la Rue du Temple* was the fatal limit, beyond which the privilege from arrest ceased; and many were the tricks and stratagems employed by creditors and bailiffs to seduce to the left bank of the fated watercourse the poor debtors who walked on the right side. A gentleman might observe passing before him on the opposite side of the street the

woman he had loved, linked with a jolly mousquetaire, who grinned sarcastically as he passed along. Wo to the unfortunate debtor, should he give way to the temptation of following them and of passing the boundary! The mousquetaire is suddenly turned into a bailiff, who instantly produces a warrant, and drags off to prison the sad victim of jealousy.

Sometimes a bankrupt trader is informed that one of his old debtors, seized with remorse of conscience, is waiting for him in an adjoining street with a bag of gold. Wo to him if he falls into the trap! The debtor is transformed into an athletic officer of the law, who rudely seizes the too confiding insolvent, and conducts him to a place of safety.

The subjects of the grand prior were thus obliged constantly to remain on the watch against a surprise. Each remained tranquilly in the general asylum, occupied with pleasure or business; and the common events of Paris only reached it by hearsay, as in distant provincial towns. On Sundays, however, and every evening after sunset, the inhabitants of the Temple enjoyed the liberty of walking through any part of Paris. They might proceed to the most public places, and defy their creditors by an annoying and irritating display of wealth and luxury; but the instant the sun reappeared over the horizon, they were quickly obliged to return; and many imprudent fellows, in their devotions to Venus or Bacchus, had often cause to repent their forgetfulness of the prescribed hour.

Such was formerly the sanctuary of the Temple. We ask our reader's pardon for the length of this detail; but

it was necessary, before resuming our story, to make him acquainted with that extraordinary portion of Paris, to which we are now about introducing him, one year after the ten thousand crowns had been stolen from Sire Poliveau, whose ruin was thereby consummated.

In a narrow passage distant from the centre of the Temple, far removed from the turbulent scenes of the locality, and nearly in front of the celebrated tower, stood an obscure tavern, the visitors to which had to proceed by a well known byway, sheltered by thickly enclosed hedges. It was an old, lofty wooden house, the timbers nearly rotten, and the whole fabric apparently tottering to the ground. But a luxuriant vine, planted near the principal entrance, concealed the ravages of time, and by its ample foliage imparted a lively and pleasing appearance to the ancient edifice.

It was here, owing to the cheapness of its wine, and perhaps its freedom from noise, that the more quiet portion of the inhabitants generally assembled. In consequence of this it was called *The Citizen's Tavern*, to distinguish it from *The Gentleman's Tavern*, situated at the other extremity of the Temple, near the principal entrance. The visitors, however, to the Citizen's Tavern were not limited to ruined traders and other poor wretches. Although the distinction of castes was as well established within the Temple's boundaries as in other parts of Paris, certain gentlemen did not consider it inconsistent with their dignity to mix with the plebeians; but truth compels us to add, that these wanderers were seldom overburdened with money, and they consequently found themselves more at

their ease in the company of the unpretending citizens who frequented this quiet place of entertainment. The scenes of disorder, quarrelling, and scandal were here much less frequent than in the luxurious and expensive tavern patronized by the bankrupt aristocracy and great insolvent seigneurs.

One summer's evening about sunset several persons were assembled in the lower room of the tavern, the only furniture of which consisted of a few old tables and some rough wooden benches and stools. The open windows permitted the fresh air to circulate through the chamber, and the eyes to wander on the horizon bounded by the limits of the Temple. Millions of sparrows chattered in the trees, and the night birds had already commenced their dismal chaunt from the dark summit of the grand tower. Several customers had quitted the tavern to wander about Paris, for as we have already said it was at night alone that the inhabitants of the Temple enjoyed that liberty. Five or six traders only remained disputing loudly about a few farthings over a game of lansquenet.

Near the window sat a man of high stature in a faded military costume with buff collar, and whose forehead marked with a large red gash imparted a most repulsive appearance to his features. This personage sat alone at a table before a pot of hippocras, holding on his knees an unwieldy sword with an iron handle. He said nothing, and silently emptied his glass. When, however, the disputes of the farthing gamblers became too loud and troubled his meditations, he gave them to understand by

a growl analogous to that of a mastiff, that he was not pleased, and this sign of his discontent instantly produced silence among the poor players.

Facing this man, or he might more properly be called this rude tavern tyrant, in a dark corner of the room, sat an old man of humble appearance, bent down by age and sorrows. The solitary table before him bore no refreshment. He seemed either too poor to pay for anything, or to have forgotten in his mournful reverie the attentions of an old humpbacked servant who was busy about him. He appeared to be in a state of insensibility, leaning on the table with his forehead buried in his hands. From time to time he cast a distracted look towards the window, from whence he could see all who passed before the house. He was, in short, so perfectly immobile and silent that probably no one in the tavern was aware of his presence.

On the other hand, the savage looking Balafré appeared also to be expecting some one; but, far from imitating the patient resignation of the silent old man, he knitted his large grey eyebrows, and uttered at intervals indistinct sounds something like oaths. He appeared, however, to become more calm on hearing a loud clear voice addressing the tavern keeper in an insolent tone:

"It is Captain du Corbineau whom I want. How, you rascal! don't you know the brave Captain du Corbineau?"

"This way! this way!" cried the Balafré in a hoarse voice, at the same time rising.

This personage, with whom our readers are already acquainted, and who was no other than Count de Maule, or the person so styled, now entered the hall. Although

my lord count still affected great airs and carried a high head, he was, however, not so richly equipped as on the day he enacted the comedy of the tame fawn at Poliveau's. His moustache might have been equally trimmed, his plumes equally high; but on the other hand, his doublet was horribly seedy, and his trunk breeches had lost their primitive colour. In short, he was alone, and appeared no longer in a position to keep dangling at his heels the train of lackeys and pages who followed him in former days.

Notwithstanding the meanness of his attire, de Manle threw a proud and contemptuous glance at the traders as he passed near them, and hastened towards Balafrè, whom he addressed with his usual polite obsequiousness.

"I salute you with all my soul, captain! *Veramente*, I am more happy than your enemies, who dare not look you in the face—you are so brave! I am delighted——"

"Hold! a truce with your nonsensical compliments", interrupted du Corbineau with rudeness. "You know, friend, that I didn't bring you to this place to spend our time in idle gossip; take your place at once, and we can talk and drink at the same time".

The count sat down, while his companion filled out a goblet of hippocras, which the other quickly swallowed without much entreaty.

When de Manle entered the room, the silent old man, of whom we have spoken, suddenly rose, and seemed anxious to rush on him; but almost at the same moment he fell back heavily on his seat, uttering a deep groan.

The two friends did not observe this movement of their neighbour; and after having emptied their goblets, the old soldier in an accent of rough cordiality said:

"Zounds! cavalier, it's a long time since we've had a drinking bout together. What have you been doing since we last saw each other?"

"Follies, my dear fellow—the follies of a gentleman!" answered the count in a nonchalant manner, crossing one leg over the other.

"By the by", resumed the captain, lowering his voice, "I've heard that you were mixed up in some damnable transaction".

"You may well say that", quickly answered de Manle in a higher tone, apparently wishing to conceal nothing from the strangers present. "We gentlemen of the court are always engaged in some damnable or dashing transaction; but it makes the time pass pleasantly, and we are not like your poor beggarly wretches——"

"Aye", rejoined du Corbineau with a sarcastic grin, "but for all that, people are sent to the galleys".

De Manle replied in a contemptuous manner: "Fie, captain!—fie! you have learned bad language in the wars; you do not understand courtesy. You never heard of a gentleman of good birth being sent to such a place. Chavagna, Chatillon, Saucy, played many queer tricks, and always escaped harmless. But I will tell you all about it; it was a trick—a mere trick".

"Speak low, at least", said du Corbineau, pointing to the citizens, who appeared to be paying some attention to their conversation.

"I don't care who hears me!" cried the boaster, casting a threatening look towards his neighbours. "If there be among all the people here a single gentleman who

thinks I have acted wrongly, let him say so to me, and I will satisfy him.

"But to return to our adventure. You must know that Villenègre and I had determined to take vengeance on a booby shopkeeper who refused us credit. Little Villenègre was in love with the old man's daughter, and we resolved to carry off the wench. The night arrived; we planted a ladder against the window, and my companion mounted, while I kept watch with my servants. But what do you think!—my rascals, to make the time pass pleasantly, commenced breaking open the shop, when a scoundrel who belonged to the house suddenly threw himself on us, crying and shouting like the very Devil. I gave him one cut which upset him, and he fell; but his cries alarmed the watch. So we seized the ladder, and made off, leaving Villenègre to extricate himself as well as he could".

"And how did he get out of the scrape?"

"Faith, I cannot tell; I did not return for fear of the soldiers, who patrolled the neighbourhood. I sent back my lackeys with the ladder to deliver the prisoner, but the villains, instead of obeying me, amused themselves by robbing the shop; and it was reported that they actually carried off ten thousand crowns from the old draper! I cannot yet forbear laughing, when I think of the speechless look of the old knave on finding his bags carried off!"

He commenced laughing loudly, and looking with an air of brazen effrontery towards the traders, who had ended their game, listening with surprise to the horrible details of which he had the impudence to boast so

publicly. Du Corbineau with imperturbable *sang froid* waited till this burst of mirth passed over.

"And what was the result of all this?" he asked.

"What was the result?—a horrible uproar. These citizens cannot be made to comprehend that their daughters are for gentlemen, and their purses for men of ability. This fellow made the Devil's own noise, and with the assistance of the lieutenant of the short robe, he had my secretary and valet-de-chambre arrested—two sharp, knowing fellows, who, out of their little profits, never refused me the droits of the admiralty, as it should be; and they have been sent off to work at the king's galleys, as if they were merely the valets of a quack or a scoundrel".

"That was a great loss to your comrade", said the captain in a tone of lugubrious raillery; "for I know that these fellows yielded a better revenue than all your patrimony could produce—and that, between you all, many a poor bird was well plucked. But how comes it that, with all your interest among people of influence, you could not save your associates?"

"I had work enough to save myself", replied de Manle jocosely. "They have latterly got a singular fashion of treating the nobility. This Lieutenant Defunctis particularly pursued me like a very Devil. But I had taken my precautions; and if I had not been released, I would have thrown all publicly on the Marquis de Villenègre, which would not have been very agreeable to the family. Measures were then adopted to get me out of the matter: I, of course, had to grease the palms of some who threatened to make disclosures: and thus, by my cleverness, I escaped. A fool in my place would have been finished.

"But the worst of the matter was, that in quitting prison, I met young Villenègre, from whom I received a sword thrust that confined me to my bed for six months. Although there is no shame in saying so, he repaid me for it, the rogue, on the faith of a gentleman".

By the way of peroration, the narrator swallowed a large goblet of hot hippocras, of which the host had just brought in a full measure. The captain fixed his savage eyes on him, as if to discover what perverse thoughts lay concealed beneath such assumed frivolity.

"The result of all this", said he at last, in a harsh, deep voice, "is that you're now in rather a bad condition, and that the Devil is beginning to dance in your purse. I want to know if this is the fact, and if you are perfectly disposed to listen to what I have to say to you?"

There was something in this language which offended the assumed dignity of the Count de Maule; he threw himself backwards, and with an air of wounded pride said:

"What object have you, captain, in thus speaking of the bad state of my affairs? Do you come here to insult my misfortunes? It is true, that since that damned business of Poliveau's, I could not prevent the confiscation of my County de Maule, and the loss of my castles and splendid demesnes. But my honour still remains, captain; and it is not well done on your part—because we know you are brave——"

"And we know you are equally so, cavalier", interrupted his interlocutor rather coldly. "I do not wish to quarrel with you now. I will admit—if it pleases you—that you lost not merely a county, but the finest duchy in France and Navarre; but", he continued in a low tone,

"if I spoke of the bad state of your affairs, it was because I wished to propose something to you that might retrieve them".

"Never more welcome", rejoined de Manle in a softened voice. "You have lived in camps, Corbineau, and cannot appreciate the feelings of a refined companion; I therefore forget your apparent want of courtesy respecting my poor county. But as you have something to propose, speak quickly—I am entirely at your service".

"What I have to say should not be heard by so many people", whispered the Balafrè; "and if you will retire a moment with me——"

Without waiting for him to finish, the count rose, and drawing his hat over his eyes, said:

"Is that all, friend? I will quickly get rid of the rascals that are annoying us". Then addressing the citizens, who regarded him with astonishment, he called out resolutely: "Hallo, rascals! quit this place at once, and let us be disembarrassed of your sottish presence. I want to talk with my friend here on business, and we cannot permit your asses' ears to be so near us".

The quiet customers of the tavern rose in their turn, and seeing the insolent bravo advancing towards them, put themselves in a posture of defence. Some got sticks, others seized the stools, and one of them demanded to know by what right he pretended to turn them out of a public place in which they had offended no one.

"What, you comical rascals, are you going to resist?" cried the count, seizing the hat of the spokesman, and throwing it out of the window.

"Comrade de Manle", said the captain, "never mind

these varlets. Don't quarrel for a trifle: we shall retire, and——"

But de Maule seemed to think his honour was in jeopardy if he retracted, and raising his sword, without however drawing it, he continued:

"Come along!—give way there! Go into the street, and see if I am there. I promise you, that after I finish my conversation with the captain, I'll take a throw of the dice with any of you that has pistoles to throw away".

At the same time he forced out the citizens, who retired somewhat reluctantly, apparently intimidated by his bullying air. After the last of them had quitted the threshold, he closed the door quickly, and returned in a vaunting manner to his friend. It was then, for the first time, he observed the old man who remained in the obscure corner of the chamber, and who during the preceding scene remained mute and silent.

"Well now, whom have we got here?" ejaculated the count with surprise; "where the Devil must this old dotard have come from? Well, my good man, have you not heard what I told these people, and must I——"

He stopped suddenly, and in spite of his effrontery seemed agitated. The person to whom he spoke had just turned round, and by the fading light of the evening he recognized Nicholas Poliveau, pale, feeble and broken down. His griefs and sufferings for the last twelve months seemed to have added twenty years to his age.

Captain Corbineau, astonished at the sudden change visible in his companion, was about asking him the cause, when the unfortunate draper, pointing his finger towards the count, said in a low penetrating voice—

"Behold the man! It was by him my daughter was lost, my money stolen, my name degraded. It was by him that I, who should now be wealthy, respected, happy, am alone, poor, isolated from the world, doomed to infamy. Bad as you may be, do not associate with him—he is cursed, and his companionship will bring misfortune to both".

He then turned round and slowly retired, leaving the miserable pair apparently fascinated by his look, and in a state of agitation equally inconsistent with the fierce nature of the one and the heartless impenetrability of the other. De Maule was the first to recover his self-possession.

"I was told", said he, jeeringly, "that Poliveau had retired within the precincts of the Temple, but faith I had quite forgotten him; who the Devil would have imagined that the old crow had alighted so close to us?"

"I do not like", said the captain, knitting his eyebrows, "to hear these old crows croaking in our way. It bodes no good, besides which, the matter which I have to propose to you is somewhat connected with this evil prophet——"

"With him—Poliveau?"

"Yes, himself. Let us speak low, and walk to the lower end. A certain wealthy and powerful individual lately sent for me, touching a bold proceeding which he contemplated, and which required great address and caution. As for me my only tools are the sword and poignard, which you know in certain places obtained for me the title of Captain Cut-throat; and as you are well known as a clever fellow, I determined to make you my partner in the

matter. You told me also I believe that you had been wounded by the young Marquis de Villenègre, and that you were anxious to be revenged. I now offer you an opportunity of repaying him in his own coin, and of pocketing besides your share of a thousand pistoles, What say you? Will you assist? Yes or no?"

Although the Count de Maule, as we have already seen, did not pique himself on over-refined delicacy, still the brutal freedom of his companion did not on the present occasion appear entirely to his taste.

While the captain was speaking he assumed a cool and dignified air, and when he had finished he kept stroking his chin—apparently meditating a prudent and convenient answer.

"Captain", said he, after a long pause, "I look upon you as a man of courage, and I wish to serve you with all my soul; but we should know what we're about. I know you have made honourable war under the late king, and that since then you have lived by drawing the cards, marking the dice, and courageously assisting an unarmed friend in a quarrel. This is all very well. Many honest people live in a similar manner, and I have nothing to object to it. You know also that before the confiscation of my poor county, I was myself often obliged to assist fortune a little, and to work my way with the companions of Malta, with whom I sometimes met you. Now, whether you are called Captain Cut-throat, or not, I don't mind—the word must be taken in a proper sense—and I would much rather believe that it was bestowed on you from your skill in using the sword or poignard in fair and honourable duel. With regard to your proposition I

have this to say: a few hundred pistoles would be very acceptable, and I confess I should like to have them in my pockets: lawyers and jailors have completely drained me—and in losing my poor valets, I lost my best support. As far as young Villenègre is concerned, he is, you see, a little rascal for whom I have no great love; but I will never consent to be revenged on him in any manner inconsistent with the honour of a gentleman. If it be only, however, intended to take a short turn on him, or play him a trick which may be repeated in high society, you may count on my assistance, and I shall not be found wanting".

A sinister smile ruffled the captain's countenance.

"Well", said he, "be it so; you shall have only that part of the business which may suit you best. I'll arrange the rest, and when the matter is completed, you may crow like a cock, and report the story among your noble friends in the most approved manner".

"It is done, then! Well, now, my good cavalier, propound your plan. In the first place, who is the worthy treasurer who is to hand out the thousand pistoles?"

"I have already five hundred in my purse; the rest will be paid when the job is finished. The treasurer is the old Duke de Villenègre, the father of our gallant".

"S'death! what do you tell me?" asked de Manle with surprise. "What! this old, gouty, enervated lord, who will die one of those fine mornings without bidding adieu to any one?"

"Precisely so; and it is because he is going to die—and because he knows that immediately after his death

his son will contract a marriage disgraceful to the family, that he wishes, while alive, to prevent such a misfortune. This morning, as I told you, he sent for me to his chamber at the hotel de Villenegre; Mignon, his confidential valet, and an old friend of mine, who now calls himself M. Laileur, and as sharp a fellow as any in Paris, told him I was a resolute fellow, and he explained to me how matters stood. It appears that the marquis still continues madly in love with the draper's daughter, who since the night of the famous adventure in which you played a part, has been shut up in the convent of *Ave Maria* under the protection of the Lieutenant of the Short Robe, Defunctis. The young gallant never sleeps, and wanders night and day about the convent, into which he cannot obtain admission. It is suspected, however, that the lieutenant's wife, a foolish woman, who it is said leads her good man by the nose, encourages the marquis in his hopes, and frequently imparts to him intelligence of the damsel, with whom she is in daily intercourse. The father is outrageous, but his injunctions are useless; the son pretends to say that his word of honour as a gentleman is engaged to espouse the girl, and she shall be his wife in spite of God or the Devil. The duchess, who is very old, has lost the little reason she had, and is now in a state of complete imbecility. The old nobleman, in speaking of this, shed tears of rage and despair, and appeared so much affected, that Mignon and I thought he would have died in our presence. He at length became calm, and said he confided in us to prevent his name from being so dishonoured".

"Truly", ejaculated de Maule, "we shall perform a

magnificent action, which must be spoken of. Virtue demands it of us, and it is as easy as any other thing in life: we shall do it for the money. But hasten, captain, and let me know what steps we are to take to save the honour of the noble house of Villenègre?"

"I proposed a capital plan", rejoined Corbineau in a dull, heavy voice; "namely, to set fire to the convent during the night, and to burn all in it. But this idea was not agreeable: some of these high-minded people have strange scruples at first, but, like others, they generally find out good means to attain their object. So Mignon, who is a fellow of great resources, suggested the other plan—to carry out which, we require the aid of your services".

"Say then, friend Corbineau", said de Manle, shaking his head with embarrassment: "if this new plan is not milder than the first, I cannot be your man: I have no wish to implicate myself in an affair which may result in the gallows or the wheel".

The ruffian, darting a glance of anger and contempt at him, said:

"You withdraw already! Are you afraid?"

"I do not withdraw, my friend—and I never knew fear; but I am not over anxious to have at my heels that unchained Devil, Defunctis, who has already had me so firmly in his gripe. If I hadn't the good fortune to have my business so mixed up with little Villenègre's, that they could neither condemn nor absolve me, it is possible I would have suffered severely in regard to Poliveau's case—a mere bagatelle".

"Why, you must be terribly afraid of this Defunctis",

said the captain with a dark and disdainful smile. "How would you act, then, if, like me, you were condemned for three years, and still defied him and his officers throughout all Paris?"

De Manle expressed by a peculiar grimace his dissatisfaction, and rejoined, after a temporary silence:

"I do not wish to know your secrets, captain. Recollect that we have agreed to divide the business between us: but for my part, I'll have nothing to do in the transaction if it involves me with the Lieutenant of the Short Robe".

"Well, well", said Corbineau, "every thing shall be as you please. What the Devil, man!—friends should not act like Turks! The only dangerous thing in this whole affair is to carry off this foolish young woman to a place of safety. I will undertake that part of the business. As to you, you have only to let matters take their course: you will run no risk. You will mortify little Villenègre by blowing up his future prospects, and, at the same time, pocket five hundred pistoles. Besides you may relate the adventure as you like, and maybe it won't redound to your honour!"

"I tell you what I'll do—no matter what happens", cried de Manle with increased warth, at the same time seizing the captain's hand over the table, "friend Corbineau, I'm yours entirely—I ask nothing more. Provided it's a bold, gay adventure, I am content. To deprive this little Villenègre of his mistress, and to pocket the father's pistoles for doing it—it will be a grand affair! No person will be spoken of at court but me—every one will be anxious to see me—my cleverness will be

extolled—I will be weighed down with honours and pensions—and the greatest nobles will seek my friendship! Upon my life, bravo, captain! I must embrace you—you have made my fortune by engaging me in this glorious affair!"

At the same time he rose, and in the transports of his joy—transports, no doubt, in which the fumes of the hippocras had a share—he embraced the frightful cut-throat, who appeared to submit awkwardly to his warm familiarity. Then regaining his position, he resumed in a lively tone:

"When shall we commence, my dear friend Corbineau?"

"This very night".

"And shall we be alone?"

"I will bring with me a few knowing old blades from the Court of Miracles, who fear neither Heaven nor Hell".

"That's all well: I would rather have had gentlemen for our auxiliaries. And how do you propose to get admission into the convent?"

"We shall not have to enter it at all; we shall find the young damsel in another place".

"Where—where, my dear friend?"

"Even here, within the limits of the Temple. Never fear—the duke is well informed; Mignon has sowed the golden seed, and they both know what is passing. Besides, Monsieur Defunctis, of whom you have such a dread, is anxious to efface the remembrance of his severity towards the marquis by assisting the old duke. But you remind me", said Corbineau rising, "that our associate, Mignon, is waiting to give us our final instructions. I

may, therefore, say, my dear cavalier, that we can reckon on you?"

"I am yours with my whole soul".

"Very well, it is done. I must now go to collect people, and prepare every thing. You will wait for me here. But no—these alleys and byeways may create suspicion". Then approaching the window, and pointing out the tower of the Temple, he added: "When the clock strikes ten, be at the foot of the turret facing the prior's palace: the moon will rise at the opposite side, and you'll be in the shade. If I cannot come, I will send a messenger who will say to you—'*Au diable les nonnes*'; you will answer—'*Vive le Val des Ecoliers*'. These will be our signs of mutual recognition. You will then follow that man, and do whatever he tells you".

"It is agreed: at ten I shall be at my post".

"Mind now, comrade", rejoined the captain, adjusting his heavy sword, and casting a half savage look at the count, "I hope the business will not fail by your imprudence. Keep sober; I know that you are well disposed to drink beyond measure, and indeed it even now appears that you have taken more claret than is prudent for our design".

"Captain!" said the count with an air of wounded pride.

"Take care; but to keep your zeal from cooling, it is but fair to give you earnest. Here", he continued, depositing on the table a handful of gold pieces, "is something to keep your courage alive: and now, adieu. Do not forget the hour and the password". And at the same time he thrust his hat over his eyes and quickly disappeared.

Left alone, de Maule grasped the gold, which he placed in a purse suspended to his belt, according to the fashion of that period. He then approached the window, and apparently busied himself in counting the time he should have to remain before the hour fixed for the rendezvous; it was yet daylight, although the sun had disappeared below the horizon.

"I have still", he said to himself, "two good hours to spare, and pistoles in my purse. I must employ them".

He ran towards the door, which his companion had left open, and perceiving in the adjoining room some of the persons whom he had so unceremoniously turned out, exclaimed in a loud voice:

"Hallo! good people, come in here—you may enter now; I owe you reparation, and you shall have it—at dice, cards, or any way you like best. Come in all of you!—I have plenty of golden crowns, and I'll treat you to what you like. And you, landlord of the Devil, bring in wine, hippocras, claret, for these poor fellows; I will pay for all. I like their company, and, *mordieu!* I wish to teach them to drink like gentlemen".

The persons thus invited manifested no feelings of displeasure at the outrage he had previously committed by forcing them out of the apartment; and, in five minutes afterwards, he was surrounded by a dozen individuals, with whom we shall leave him boasting, swearing, and drinking.

CHAPTER V.

The reason of Nicholas Poliveau being obliged to take refuge in the sanctuary of the Temple, may be easily explained: the robbery of the ten thousand crowns he had borrowed, accelerated his ruin; besides which, the loss of his daughter had deprived him of the great source of his success in trade. Rosette, by her grace and gentleness, and her talent in attracting customers, had alone kept back the downfall of the old man, whose affairs had been for some time in a state of derangement, owing to the public offices to which he had latterly devoted his attention to the neglect of his business. In two months, therefore, after the catastrophe in *la Rue de la Tixeranderie*, the trader was obliged to declare himself a bankrupt, and to retire into the privileged quarter, in order to escape the infamous penalties to which persons so circumstanced were then liable.

Perhaps if he had been left to himself he would never have thought of seeking an asylum in a place in which were collected so many persons of damaged reputation. Old, sick, dishonoured, separated for ever from a daughter whom he had loved to adoration, and the thoughts of whom had now become odious—an object of the raillery of his equals, and the hatred of his creditors, he would have sunk under the weight of such accumulated evils, had he not been sustained by the strong religious feeling which was then so deeply rooted in the hearts of the old citizens of Paris. In the midst, too, of all his griefs, he had preserved one friend, whose zeal never flagged: this was

Giles Poinselot, his first apprentice. Scarcely recovered from his wound, which fortunately was not very serious, the young man made incredible exertions to retrieve his master's affairs, and, in all circumstances, he displayed an energy which the unfortunate Poliveau no longer possessed. He had given up the foolish ambition which was then the crying evil of young men of his condition, of attempting to raise himself above his rank in life. He had become zealous, attentive, careful, and sought by every means in his power to preserve the father of her whom he so fondly loved. When the bankruptcy became inevitable, it was he who sustained the failing courage of the old man, and reminded him of his Christian duties; it was he who almost dragged him by force into the sanctuary of the Temple, and from that time he never ceased lavishing on him aid and consolation.

Thus Giles Poinselot appeared to be the only connecting link between the old man and this world. He occupied a lodging next his master, whose apprentice he still considered himself, and he employed his days in running among Poliveau's creditors, for the purpose of effecting a settlement, or to obtain such small sums as might be necessary to the support of the old man. He passed every evening with him reading pious works, avoiding every thing calculated to revive past events, and encouraging him in the hope of seeing his name once more reëstablished—in short, he evinced towards him the attention and devotion of an affectionate son to a father. It is not, therefore, wonderful that Nicholas Poliveau, on his part, felt the greatest affection for his faithful apprentice.

There was, besides, another reason which rendered him more dear. The old man never spoke of his daughter, and he had expressly prohibited Giles, and even Guillaume, who occasionally came to see him, from mentioning her name. He was, however, aware that Giles had obtained permission from Lieutenant Defunctis, and from the abbess of the convent in which Rosette was placed, occasionally to see his former mistress through the grated door of the parlour—a privilege very consolatory to the feelings of the poor recluse. By a kind of paternal instinct Poliveau guessed the days on which Giles went to visit his doomed daughter, and on those occasions he scrutinized the features of the apprentice, as if to catch a vague reflection of the happiness or grief of Rosette; he did not directly question him on the subject; his pride forbade him from appearing to show the least interest in the fate of a daughter whom he had driven away. Still he would inquire if every thing went on well—if there was any body on Earth that could love him—if those who so deeply injured him showed any signs of repentance; and when Giles answered conformably to his wishes, the poor old man shed tears, pressed him to his breast, and kissed the hand which had probably touched even slightly that of his daughter.

Giles Poinselot, on his part, admirably lent himself to the secret feelings of his master; he never appeared to see the drift of his questions, and was cautious in his answer, not to show that he understood their meaning. He felt that a word prematurely spoken would irritate the old man, and that any indiscreet allusion would awaken feelings which were better suppressed. Once, indeed, an

individual had rashly revived in Poliveau a recollection of all his sufferings; it was the young Marquis de Villenègre. In his despair he waited on the old bourgeois, and supplicated him to pardon his innocent daughter. But this imprudent step only exasperated the unfortunate father. He accused Villenègre with being the cause of all his sorrows—he overpowered him with a torrent of angry and scornful reproaches—and the young gentleman was compelled to retire before such a terrible explosion of implacable resentment. Giles, therefore, conjectured that after this fruitless attempt, the passions of his master had not yet had sufficient time to cool down, and that it would be more prudent to wait than to risk all by too much precipitation. He did not, however, despair of being soon able to bring about a reconciliation between the father and daughter; he calculated in silence the changes that time and reflection daily wrought in the mind of Poliveau, and he could almost predict the time that, in spite of the stern prohibition, he might pronounce the dear name of Rosette, and obtain her pardon. Such was the state of the unfortunate draper when he met the Count de Maule in the Citizen's Tavern. The impudence of this man, who had boasted so publicly of his crimes, stirred up whatever hot blood remained in the old man's veins. After quitting the tavern he walked thoughtlessly through the by-ways which surrounded the dwellings. This last outrage had revived the recollection of his misfortunes; and he ran like a mad man across the enclosures, when he felt his cloak gently pulled. He quickly turned round and perceived Giles Poinselot, who had been following him for a short time.

In the commencement of his misfortunes, the presence

of the faithful Giles had been always agreeable, but at this moment his eyes rested with delight on him whom he considered his best friend. He did not also fail to remark that Giles was dressed with more than ordinary neatness, a certain sign that he had visited the convent of *l'Ave Maria*, the residence of Rosette.

He seized the arm of Poinselot warmly, while the latter saluted him as respectfully as if he were still his dependant.

"Ah! you are here at last, my poor Giles", said he. "I despaired of seeing you. I went before you as far as the Citizen's Tavern, but you were so long absent that I became tired waiting for you, and went into the tavern for a moment to rest myself. Good God! I regret I was not able to resist the fatigue, for I met in that cursed spot, a man whom I scorn and hate more than any one in the world".

"Who, then, is this man, master?" asked Poinselot with uneasiness.

"That abominable bully, the Count de Manle, who had the effrontery to boast publicly of a crime, for which, if justice were now administered as in the days of M. de Sully, he should have been hanged in the Place de Greve!"

Giles felt more at ease on hearing him pronounce the name of the Count de Manle.

"Calm yourself, master", said he in a careless tone; "he of whom you've been speaking must come to the gallows at last. I was apprehensive that you might have met another person, who, in my eyes, is still more culpable than that scheming count".

They then proceeded towards their humble abode. Giles seemed thoughtful, and appeared anxious to reveal

to Poliveau something which apparently caused him some embarrassment. Several times he stopped suddenly and was on the point of speaking, but he as quickly resumed his pace and remained silent, as if reflection had changed his determination. This abstractedness, so different from his usual manner, struck the old man, who at length said to him:

"What's the matter with you this evening, my poor Giles? Have you had any bad news? or have my creditors decidedly refused to agree to the arrangement which you proposed to them in my name?"

"It is not that, master", said Poinselot; "every thing goes on well in your affairs—and I hope shortly to see you quitting the asylum of the Temple. But——"

He stopped again, hesitated, and seemed unable to find words to explain the subject which pre-occupied his mind. The old man, as if by instinct, guessed the cause of his agitation—it was a subject that touched him more nearly than any thing in the world.

"What, then, is the matter?" said he, affecting a tone of profound indifference.

The apprentice summing up all his courage, replied in one breath:

"Well, then, you may expect to find on your return home persons the sight of whom will astonish you!"

"What!—strangers in my place?"

Poinselot made no reply.

"And who the Devil can it be, unless some reluctant debtor who is not satisfied at my having given up all I possessed in the world—or, perhaps, some friend? But I forget—I have now no friend but thee!"

"Well, my dear master, if it be so", replied the young man with warmth, and pressing Poliveau's arm to his breast, "if you really think that you owe me any gratitude for the feeble services I have rendered you—for the zeal, the devotedness, the affection which I have always manifested towards you—I beseech you by all that is most sacred, to promise to be calm and reasonable with the persons who are now waiting to see you".

The old man stopped.

"What does this mean, friend Giles?" said he. "What am I to understand by all this?"

"Well, master, if it must be said", replied the apprentice timidly, "I beg to say that it is of your daughter that——"

"I have no daughter—I have no longer any?" cried Poliveau with vehemence, and stamping the ground. "But I thank thee for having forewarned me: Giles, I will not now enter my lodgings, and I beg of thee to go and inform these strangers that I will not see them".

At the same time he made a movement as if to return the way he came, but the apprentice, holding him with a firm hand, said with much emotion:

"For God's sake, master, if you wish for the salvation of your soul, and the approbation of your conscience, do not retire; perhaps you will repent the whole of your life having missed the opportunity which now presents itself of an interview. Listen—if it must be said, it was I that promised these visitors that you would consent to see them—it was I that introduced them into your apartments—it is I that implore you to listen to them. You will not refuse the only favour which I ever asked from

you in the course of my life. Master, for your own peace of mind—for mine—come; I ask it of you earnestly—I supplicate you not to refuse".

The clasped hands and deeply penetrating voice of Giles had evidently softened Poliveau, who probably at heart felt disposed to yield. He appeared, however, to pause a few moments.

"Well, be it so", said he at last. "But it is on thy account alone, my good Giles, that I consent to see these visitors: I can refuse nothing to the only devoted friend who adhered to me in my misfortunes. Yes, I will receive these strangers; I will have the courage still to speak of a wretch who——"

His voice failed, and he bent his head to conceal his emotion. Giles observed him with anxiety; the old man pulled him hurriedly along.

"Come along—come along", he said in a low voice, "you shall see if there be necessity of recommending me to be calm and cool. If, as I suppose, these strangers be Lieutenant Defunctis and his wife come to intercede for her whom I have denounced, you shall hear the answer which I will give to that unfortunate creature".

By expressing his idea that the visitors were the lieutenant and his wife, he probably hoped that Poinselot would undeceive him; but the young man said nothing, apprehensive that his answer might induce the irritated father to change his determination.

The master and the apprentice lodged in an old house situated at the extremity of the enclosure, not far from the place in which, at a later period, the rotundo of the Temple was built. This house formed one of a range of

buildings then occupied by the refugees whose business did not compel them frequently to visit the commercial and aristocratic quarter near the principal entrance. In addition to the rent being more moderate, this locality had the advantage of better air and greater solitude. A kind of meadow planted with trees surrounded these habitations, and beyond the walls to the east, which bounded the sanctuary, might be seen the ramparts of the city, and the tops of the magnificent trees which ornamented the public promenades.

Notwithstanding his fatigue, and the evident repugnance he manifested towards the approaching interview, the old man walked with rapidity, and as he advanced nearer his dwelling he put on an appearance of firmness, which was evidently assumed, for a slight paleness overspread his features, and Giles felt his arm tremble in his grasp. On arriving at the small area in front of the house, they perceived a hackney carriage stationed close to the door. The coachman had descended from his seat, and was speaking in a low voice to some persons of suspicious appearance, among whom were the Captain Balafré, and a well dressed individual, who appeared to be the *major domo* of a great house. On seeing the two men approach, they ceased speaking, and disappeared in the obscurity caused by the darkness of the evening and the deep foliage of the trees. Neither Poliveau nor Poinselot remarked these suspicious circumstances. They reached the house, and climbed, without taking breath, the tortuous stairs which conducted them to the second story. But the resolution which had hitherto supported the old man seemed suddenly to vanish; he stopped on

the landing, and forcibly seizing the young man's arm, he muttered in a half stifled voice: "No, I will not enter. Thou deceivest me, Giles; I am certain thou hast hatched some plot against me!" But Giles, without answering, pushed open the door, and almost in spite of his resistance, drew Poliveau into the interior of the chamber.

By the crepusculous light which shone dimly through the solitary window, two females appeared standing in the centre of the dark and narrow apartment. One appeared to be about forty or forty-five years of age. She was dressed in the style of the wealthy citizens' wives of that period, and held in one hand a velvet mask which women of a certain age were in the habit of carrying through town or on a journey. Her features, though still pleasing, gave evidence of a somewhat light and passionate character, without, however, detracting from a general expression of good nature strongly visible in her entire physiognomy.

The other was more slender, somewhat taller, and much younger than her companion. She was dressed in the costume of a novice, entirely white; a long veil enveloped her head, and completely concealed her face. She leaned on her friend as if unable to support herself without assistance, and her entire countenance betrayed the most intense emotion.

On finding himself suddenly in the presence of these ladies, who remained mute and immoveable as two shadows in the obscurity of the chamber, Poliveau seemed under the influence of an electric shock. He cast one look —a single glance — on her who wore the veil, and his

whole frame seemed paralyzed. He had neither strength to bow to the visitors, nor to utter a single word of salutation, and remained motionless where Giles had left him, as if overcome by stupor.

On her side the lady in the veil was evidently deeply agitated. She breathed with difficulty, and trembled so violently that she appeared on the point of fainting.

Giles Poinselot and the strange lady did not speak; but they watched with deep anxiety the varying emotions of the old man and the young novice.

There was in the breathless silence of these two individuals, who were hardly visible in the darkness of the room, but who still, however, knew each other so well, something solemn which could not fail to make an impression on the most indifferent spectator.

Suddenly a shrill piercing cry was heard, and at the same moment the novice threw back her veil, rushed towards the old man, and exclaimed:

"My father! my father! it is I!"

It was indeed Rosette, but no longer the blooming laughing girl, whose pleasing manners and unsophisticated gaiety attracted so many customers to the shop of Poliveau. A year of suffering had completely changed her former happy look. She was feeble and melancholy, and her features seemed as white as the religious drapery in which she was clothed.

Rosette's companion and Giles, on hearing that heartfelt cry, so full of confiding tenderness, hoped to see the old man deeply affected. Poliveau at first indeed seemed to give way to the feelings of nature, and appeared on the

point of clasping his unfortunate daughter in his arms; but he suddenly drew back, repulsed her in a rude manner, and exclaimed in an angry voice:

"What does this woman want with me? Cursed be he who led me into this trap! Approach not; do not touch me; you horrify me!"

Terrified by the violence of his passion, the poor girl drew back in her turn, and fell on a seat half dead.

Poinselot and the strange lady had evidently calculated on the irresistible effect of a first moment, and they were struck with consternation on seeing the unfortunate result of their experiment. The apprentice ran towards Poliveau, who appeared to be about quitting the chamber, and held him by the arm, while the female stranger supported Rosette, and, rendered eloquent at seeing one of her sex a victim of injustice, exclaimed in accents of exasperation:

"Holy Mary! mother of God! Sire Poliveau, are you aware that you are not acting with justice or wisdom towards your daughter? What means this obstinacy—this brutality, when all the world affirms and swears that Rosette is guiltless of the faults you charge her with? Truly, master, if this severity be the result of your so much boasted probity, it would have been better if you had not been so honest; for you would have been a more natural father. Your conduct is unworthy of you—aye, it is I who tell you so—your conduct is odious, disgraceful to human nature".

The person who spoke with so much force and passion was the wife of the Lieutenant Defunctis, to whose care Poliveau had formerly confided his daughter; and the

affection which the good lady had shown towards Rosette for the last year justified her in warmly defending her cause. Although a kind, warm-hearted woman, the worthy bourgeoise was occasionally subject to fits of loquacity and irascibility, which formed a strong contrast to the cold and measured gravity of her husband, and it has been affirmed that on more than one occasion she disputed sovereignty with the redoubtable magistrate her own excellent lord and master. Her feelings were so exasperated at the cruel manner in which Poliveau had received his daughter, that it is probable she would have continued her torrent of invective, had not the old man interrupted her by saying in a calm and dignified manner:

"Spare yourself these complaints and reproaches, mademoiselle.* God, who judges all, can alone judge between this dishonoured creature and me. Perhaps you and those who advised this foolish step imagined time had already effaced from my memory the recollection of her faults. You are mistaken. She deceives herself if she thinks that a year of absence has appeased my anger. Believe me—rest satisfied with the evil you have done, and do not by your obstinacy add to it. Take her hence; let her forget the way to my dwelling, and be satisfied in thinking that she was not driven away as on the first occasion".

The firmness of these few words, and the calm manner in which they were pronounced, seemed to subdue the protectress of his daughter; but at the same moment

* The title of madame at this period was only given to the wives of gentlemen having the rank of cavaliers.

Rosette, rising and wiping the tears from her inflamed eyes, said with mildness not unmixed with pride:

"Father, this is a solemn occasion. If I have dared to brave your anger—which I feel I have not merited—it is because I have a duty to discharge towards you. This is, perhaps, the last time I shall ever see you, and you cannot refuse to hear me".

"I do refuse, however", he exclaimed, obstinately turning from her. "What can she say to me that I do not already know?"

"Master", cried Giles in a supplicating tone, "by all which you hold most sacred, listen to your daughter!"

"Sire Poliveau", added the lieutenant's wife, "you cannot without sin refuse her prayer; God will in the end punish you for this strange and obdurate blindness!"

The old man hesitated.

"I consent", he exclaimed, taking a seat, "in consequence of my friends' wishes; but let the painful interview be as short as possible".

Rosette remained standing before him, and for a few seconds appeared occupied in collecting her ideas. She then said in accents of angelic sweetness:

"This day the entreaties of strangers have had more power over my father, than the prayers of his daughter. Still", she continued with a melancholy smile of gratitude, addressing Giles and her companion, "may they be blessed for the precious favour which I owe to their influence".

After a short pause, she resumed:

"Father, although you have abdicated all your rights over me, I still think it my duty to render you an account

of my actions and future intentions. To-morrow, I am to quit the world, and take the eternal vows in the Convent of *l'Ave Maria*, and I come as a respectful and dutiful daughter to demand your approbation".

Notwithstanding the resolution he had taken to evince no emotion, Poliveau's whole frame trembled at hearing these words.

"She quit the world!—she become a nun!" he exclaimed. "Is this possible?"

"Yes, yes, it is too true", cried the magistrate's wife, incapable of longer silence. "On quitting the convent to come here, the lady abbess received from the archbishop the dispensation from the noviciate which she had requested, and this unfortunate child has absolutely fixed to-morrow morning for the terrible ceremonial. For pity's sake, Sire Poliveau", she continued, still approaching him, "use your authority to prevent your daughter from taking this inconsiderate step. The rules of the convent are dreadfully severe: their only food is vegetables; their only bed, straw. When once the vows are pronounced, they are never permitted to quit the cloisters: they must tear asunder all ties of family and friendship. Pray prevent her from making such a sacrifice, which she will repent when too late! No person is aware of this intention except the lady abbess and myself, and Rosette may, without the least shame, change her determination: even in the convent they are ignorant for what fête the church is prepared. Tell her, therefore, that she may yet expect happy days in the world; tell her——"

"I have nothing to say, mademoiselle", interrupted the trader, evidently attempting to suppress his feelings. "As

God has called this young woman to him, no one has a right to change her fate".

The worthy matron on hearing this stamped violently on the floor, and cried out with indignation:

"Oh! what a wretched, barbarous father!"

Rosette casting a supplicating look towards her, as if to beg her silence, resumed in the same pure and plaintive tone:

"I thank you, father, for your condescension, but this is not all. Now that I about to devote myself entirely to religion, I call upon God to witness my innocence of the faults with which you charged me. I feel it my duty to repeat once more in your presence the declaration to which you would not listen—*I am not guilty!*"

With one hand on her heart, and the other raised towards Heaven, her flowing robes, and her graceful yet self-confiding action, Rosette appeared in the dim twilight as a supernatural being, and the old man's doubts seemed at length shaken.

"Can I be mistaken? My God!" he exclaimed with a kind of religious dread, "is it possible she can be innocent?"

Rosette threw herself on her knees, and cried:

"You are mistaken, my father: I swear it! But you do not believe me!—you will no longer believe! The Lord, to punish me for my proud and thoughtless faults, has made you blind with regard to your daughter. Father, I can only say that I am innocent; I cannot again demand justice—for the word excites your anger; I ask only your pardon and pity. My dear father, for your own peace—for mine—let me not die with your

enmity: to-morrow I will quit the world, and must bid you an eternal adieu. Let it not not be said among the holy women with whom hereafter I am to live, that I am crushed with your malediction. Withdraw it, dear father—withdraw it, I implore you; and if the Almighty still deigns me the happiness of convincing you of my innocence, say at least that, whether guilty or not, you still love me!"

At last the stoical obstinacy of the old man was overcome; he struggled with a feeling at variance with his nature—his eyes became suffused with tears—he silently held out his arms, and in an instant they were clasped in each other's embrace. For some moments the silence was only broken by their sighs. At the sight of such unhoped-for reconciliation, Poinselot shed tears of joy, and the protectress of Rosette, raising her hands towards Heaven, murmured: "At last this man feels he is a father!"

Suddenly Poliveau cried out:

"A light, for pity's sake—a light, that I may see my dear daughter, my well beloved Rosette! it is such a long time since I have seen my child".

The apprentice hastened to obey his wishes, and quickly returned with a lamp, which he placed on the table.

"Can it be true?" exclaimed Rosette with a burst of tenderness, as she hung on the old man's neck; "is it possible that you still love me?"

"If I love you?—my God! Ah! have I not always loved you, even when my anger was at the highest? Hearken,—I would not confess it, but each night I pro-

nounced your name, I called you, and I then wept. My conscience reproved me for these tears, as a sign of weakness; still I experienced a sweet consolation in shedding them. But how pale and feeble you are, my child—you whom I have seen so fresh and blooming! How sad and mournful are your eyes! Still, my love, you look mild and beautiful—more beautiful, perhaps, than ever! Poor child, the burden of our misfortunes must have weighed heavily on thee!"

"Yes—oh, yes, most heavily, my good father! But now, I forget all my past griefs—I am happy! I would have purchased by the sacrifice of my life the moment that has just passed—the moment when you opened your arms to receive me: and now, I have nothing more on this Earth to desire but that God may render you as happy as you have made me".

The lieutenant's good lady, wiping away her tears, exclaimed in rather an authoritative tone:

"You are all at last become reasonable; I hope to hear no more of the convent, or vows of eternal seclusion. What is the use of your being reconciled, if you are to part for ever?"

"I will submit to my father's orders, whatever they may be", said Rosette with downcast eyes.

The old man assumed a grave and reflective air.

"I do not wish that any alteration should take place in the intentions of my child", he said in a severe tone. "I do not exactly know what secret feeling has induced her to devote herself to God, and that it is not a duty on her part to accomplish the sacrifice; therefore, notwithstanding the pain it may cost me to separate after so brief

an interview, I will not allow my feelings to prevent her from obeying the impulse of her conscience".

"I understand you, father", she said with an air of melancholy. "You have pardoned me, but you are not convinced of my innocence. You seem to think that the faults with which you reproach me demand an atonement for my own sake, as well as for the conviction of others. Father, my conscience is pure; but your wishes are sacred to me. To-morrow I will pronounce my vows, and in the solitude of the convent I hope to feel perfect peace of mind, if I can only believe that by obedience I have secured your pardon without reserve or a lingering doubt of my innocence".

Poliveau again embraced his daughter, but added nothing to induce her to change her determination. The magistrate's wife did not evince the same resignation.

"But this is folly! Are you thinking, Sire Poliveau, of what you are doing? It is said that, thanks to the exertions of your worthy apprentice, your affairs are on the point of being arranged; that you are about quitting this shocking sanctuary, and resuming once more your business. Your daughter then will be more necessary to you than ever. You need not shake your head. Poor Rosette is guilty only in your eyes. All the world loves and esteems her as formerly, and she will still receive a warm welcome from all your friends. Why then renounce the heartfelt pleasure and happiness which is in store for you if you only profit by it? You must know, Master Poliveau, that it was despair at not being able to soften down your anger that induced Rosette to adopt the extreme step of entering a convent. But now that this is

overcome, her thoughts are no longer the same, and if she pronounces the awful vow without due consideration, grief and repentance will quickly cause her death".

"What do you tell me? She die of grief!"

"Mademoiselle!" murmured Rosette, sobbing with anguish——

"Yes!" continued the loquacious bourgeoise, without minding her appeal, "she will die! And, if it must be told, I suspect that she loves one by whom she is beloved, and——"

Poliveau interrupting her, with a frown, said rather hurriedly:

"Perhaps, mademoiselle, this is not a proper time to give utterance to such sentiments, and it may be imprudent to revive thoughts which I wish to stifle. However", he continued, "if Rosette has nourished any secret hope in her heart which prevents her from devoting herself to God, she is free; but——"

"Stop, father!" she exclaimed with vehemence; "do not give utterance to an expression of doubt or anger. The zeal and affection of my generous friend have carried her too far. No human feeling can now induce me to relinquish the project of which you have approved: my determination is irrevocable".

The good man smiled on his daughter on hearing this assurance of an immediate and eternal separation. A secret lingering doubt still stifled in his heart all feeling of weakness; and such was the power of conscience on this inflexible man, that to this doubt he sacrificed his most tender affections.

"Well", said the lieutenant's wife, rising from her seat,

"only one hope now remains; and I am delighted at having sent for him who may yet prevent these unfortunates from committing an irreparable fault. But the time advances, and he is not yet come".

Rosette became violently agitated; and the old man in a tone of uneasiness asked:

"Of whom, mademoiselle, are you speaking? whom do you expect at my lodgings?"

"A person who has deeply interested me by his sorrows and his remorse; a person with whose noble character and generous sentiments I am well acquainted. He should now be here. I wrote him a note to say that we would be this evening within the precincts of the Temple; but I did not inform him of the sudden and fatal determination of Rosette. O my God! if he should not come! He alone may perhaps——"

At this moment the noise of footsteps was heard quickly ascending the stairs.

"Ah! he has come at last!" cried the bourgeoise.

"But of whom are you speaking?"

"Of the Marquis de Villenègre".

"I will not see him", cried Poliveau with violence. "What has this unworthy gentleman to do here? Does he still wish to destroy the happiness of a reconciliation between a daughter and her father? Giles, do not allow him to enter—I will not see him!"

Giles ran to obey an order which accorded so well with his secret feelings, but before he had touched the door, it opened suddenly, and the young marquis entered.

"What have you done?" said Rosette in a low voice to her companion, hiding her face in her hands. "All is lost!"

Villenègre was pale and breathless; his clothes were in disorder; and his features no longer recalled to mind the thoughtless young nobleman whom we have described in the early part of our story. A love, deep and lasting, a lively and sincere desire to make reparation for his past imprudence, had ripened his understanding, and imparted to his countenance a character of manliness which it had not formerly possessed. On seeing him, Poliveau and Giles Poinselot made a movement as if to force him out; but the lieutenant's wife with a lighter step sprang before them, and seizing the marquis by the hand, drew him into the centre of the chamber, exclaiming:

"Come in, Monsieur le Marquis, and plead your own cause! Do not be deterred by the reluctance of those who may listen to you, and speak out with the same warmth and force that you used in recounting your sorrows to me: speak, therefore; commence quickly, for your presence has been too long delayed".

"Mademoiselle", said the young man with an air of melancholy, "a son may be pardoned for not hurrying away from the bed of a dying father. Nothing but the name of a woman endeared to me by so many titles could induce me to abandon a duty so sacred".

"What do you tell me? Is, then, my lord duke, your father, so bad?"

"Since this morning he has fallen into a state of feverish excitement; the most fatal results are apprehended; and it is feared that every moment——"

"Do you hear that?" cried the magistrate's wife, addressing Poliveau. "I implore you not to be rash. The young marquis is about becoming free, and master of

his own actions; and to-morrow, perhaps, the only obstacle which separates these two dear young people may be removed".

"Mademoiselle", exclaimed Poliveau with impetuosity, "it is on your account alone that this young man, whose name reminds me of all my misfortunes, is permitted to remain so long in this dwelling. But I hope he will perceive how odious his presence is here, and that he will not force me to tell him——"

"Do not believe him, Monsieur le Marquis", exclaimed the good lady, on seeing the young nobleman blush at this outrageous reception: "the misfortunes of this poor old man have injured his reason, and blinded him to his dearest interests. Listen; when I wrote to you to come here in such haste, I had no idea of the importance of your presence at such a crisis with reference to your prospects; if you do not succeed in vanquishing the obstinacy of both father and daughter, Rosette will bury herself for ever in a cloister; in fact, to-morrow morning she is to pronounce the irrevocable vow in the convent of *l'Ave Maria*".

Villenègre was thunderstruck at this unexpected announcement.

"To-morrow morning!" he cried. "Oh! that must not be".

"And why not, monsieur? What matters it to the Marquis de Villenègre that a poor dear girl who, in the eyes of the world—aye, even in the eyes of her own father—has been destroyed by his means, should seek in religion a refuge against the evils of which he is the author? Let him permit his victims to remain in peace, and let him not come to poison by his odious presence the

last moments that a father and daughter are to pass in each other's society on this Earth!"

But the young marquis, in an immoveable attitude, regarded the old man with a dignified look, which imposed silence, and said:

"I have repeatedly told you, sir, that all your accusations in reference to your unfortunate daughter are unfounded, and I shall never cease, notwithstanding the insults you heap upon me, to render my homage to truth. Your rights over her are great, but they have their limits; by a rashness, which from my soul I deplore, I have impaired her peace, wounded her heart, compromised her reputation; you cannot deny me the means of satisfying my conscience and mine honour, in affording to her the reparation to which she is entitled. If, then, the fatal determination of which Mademoiselle Defunctis speaks is true, I implore you not to hasten it. Wait but a little for the removal of the obstacles opposed to my dearest wishes, and, perhaps", continued he in a softened tone, "the delay I seek will be very short".

This language, dignified and emphatic, appeared to make some impression upon Poliveau himself.

"These intentions of marriage, then, are serious?" said he, directing on Villenègre a searching look; "has the Marquis de Villenègre really entertained the idea of giving his name, his rank, and his fortune to the daughter of a bankrupt citizen, and in time, to deck her plebeian brow with the coronet of a duchess? I supposed such tales were only to be found in the pages of the olden times, and I thought that if a gentleman of our day put forward such professions, it would be merely to dupe a

wretched family, and to deceive a wench, vain and ambitious!"

"Nevertheless, monsieur", cried the young man with energy, "I swear to you, that since the day my fatal levity compromised your daughter, I have never ceased for a moment from seeking the means of justifying my motives honourably in your eyes and hers. Unfortunately, in the accomplishment of this, to me, sacred duty, I have had to contend against the obstinate determination of my father: compel me not to say that, perhaps whilst I speak, this determination has ceased to be an obstacle".

Poliveau followed attentively each change of his countenance, and appeared searching for the trace of some direct falsehood or mental reservation. Although his scrutiny was altogether to the advantage of the young man, he replied in a tone of defiance:

"M. de Villenègre, either I am deceived in the character of the gentlemen of our time, or you have some other motive, as yet unexpressed, for urging with such ardour".

"I have no other motive than the love which I feel for this charming and unhappy creature", cried he with warmth, "and since I should have recourse in a dreadful moment like this to thoughts of a consolatory tendency, when I should be totally absorbed in filial grief, I must tell you that I have still another motive, which is, to render a new lustre to an honourable family, which I have exposed to shame; it is to efface by my attentions, my affection, my endearments, the unhappy year now hastening to a close. Oh! envy me not this gratification, monsieur, and for mercy's sake, suffer not your daughter to take

counsel only from her despair; I shall reproach myself through my life for having been the occasion of this misfortune as well as of the others".

Villenègre ceased, awaiting his reply.

"Oh dear! what shall I say to you?" said Madame la Defunctis, casting upon Poliveau a look of satisfaction: "have you the heart to resist such agreeable arrangements?"

Poliveau seemed to reflect: all at once he turned towards Rosette, and said to her in a changed tone:

"And you, my daughter, what think you of the proposal of M. de Villenègre?"

La Belle Drapiere made no reply, and covered her face in the white veil of her noviciate.

"I demand of you", rejoined the old man, "if you are disposed to renounce the convent, and wed the man to whom your father and yourself owe all your misfortunes?"

Rosette replied in a low and timid voice:

"I have deeply repented, my father, of not having at all times conformed to your wishes. You are the arbiter of my destiny, and I shall implicitly obey your directions".

This reply did not appear by any means sufficiently explicit to the old magistrate.

"This is mighty well, Rosette; but suppose I leave you entirely free to choose between religion and the Marquis de Villenègre, what will be your choice?"

This was, to a certain degree, to refer to the decision of the young girl, and all eyes were turned upon her. Rosette was silent for some moments. She seemed a prey to extreme mental agony, and it might be supposed that her words could not reach her lips; at length she gently raised her head, and replied with a weak and tender voice:

"My father, I find nothing in all I have come here to be apprized of, that ought to change the resolution which I alone have taken, and which in my solitude I have matured. I thank M. de Villenègre for his honourable intention; it was worthy of a gentleman and a man of heart, to wish to make reparation, by marriage, for the wrong he had done to a maiden of obscure station, and of whose innocence, he, more than any other person, was aware; but in her turn she possesses a right to refuse agreeing to an arrangement that can never appear in any other light than that of a sacrifice. The daughter of the bourgeois Poliveau, the ruined merchant, who has sought refuge in the precincts of the Temple—she, in fact, who has been in other times termed *La Belle Drapiere*, and whom the nobility have seen engaged in industrial occupations behind the counter of a shop, cannot be the Marchioness de Villenègre. She can, without injustice to herself, easily account for the resistance of the Duc de Villenègre, for such a union would be an inferior match for his son. No, M. le Marquis", continued Rosette, acquiring animation as she spoke, "I do not desire to abuse an impulse of generosity, perhaps too lavish; of affection, perhaps ill-conceived, on the part of a man still young and inexperienced; besides, I am too proud to enter, despite of it, into a family which would blush for me: humble as is the condition in which I was born, it is yet too high for me to accept of humiliation in a superior rank; finally, my soul revolts at the thought of allowing the reparation you propose, to depend upon the death of one dear to you".

The marquis made a gesture of despair, murmuring, "My God! she loves me not!"

La Defunctis was stupified; Poliveau, on the contrary, seemed happy at the haughtiness of this reply; he rushed towards his daughter and embraced her with transport, crying:

"Right! right! Rosette; and now, I am sure that she who could reject with such prudence the honourable proposals of a rich and distinguished gentleman, could never have encouraged the advances of a seducer. It is no longer for you to implore my pardon, it is for me to ask yours—for me who have cursed and outraged you, and have repelled you and left you to the mercy of strangers. Pardon me, my child, and into the convent you are entering you shall bear for ever the affection and sympathies of your poor father".

Rosette, as if the effort she made had exhausted her strength, had relapsed into utter dejection.

"M. le Marquis", rejoined Poliveau, "you have heard my daughter's decision, and to it I shall add nothing. I accord justice on my part to the generosity of mind which prompts you, and I acknowledge that you have not hesitated to propose the only remedy for the evils you have caused. This declaration on my part ought to satisfy, I think, the demands of your conscience and your honour. And now, M. de Villenègre, allow me to remind you, that each moment that passes, may be, according to your own avowal, your father's latest period of existence".

The marquis started at the recollection, but the melancholy and unexpected resolve of Rosette, occupied him too deeply, and smothered every other idea.

"Mademoiselle", said he imploringly, "drive me not to despair, and allow me to hope that in a moment of greater

calmness, you will return from this insane enthusiasm, which drives you to a perilous extreme. At least, if your decision is irrevocable, why carry it into effect so precipitately: wait but a few days. For your own sake, for that of your father and your friends, reflect on the course you are pursuing. God punishes an inconsiderate proceeding in the very repentance induced by reflection".

Rosette had lowered her veil, and was weeping.

"And so", continued the young man sorrowfully, "I have deceived myself in reference to your sentiments; by your devotion to me, you have, on one fatal night, encountered the disdain of your father and the contempt of the world. This generosity, which has called forth my acknowledgment, was nothing, then, but an act springing from an extreme sense of justice".

"Let it suffice, monsieur", interrupted Poliveau, with authority; "the silence of Rosette ought to satisfy you, and henceforth no doubt can exist in your mind, that my daughter, in consequence to a certainty of the griefs we have encountered during the last year, has experienced a real call to the cloister, and"——

"I do not believe it, I do not credit a syllable of it", exclaimed La Defunctis, in an angry tone, and looking the old man fully in the face: "I have not the least dread of you, Master Poliveau; I have looked upon men more to be feared than you without being abashed, and nothing shall hinder me from stating the real facts to you. You sacrifice your daughter to a vain point of honour, to a paltry feeling of self-esteem. That is the truth. You wish us to believe that Rosette has a decided inclination for the convent, but I am well aware of the contrary, and the

abbess of the 'Ave Maria', who you know is my kinswoman, told me this very evening that this poor creature might prepare herself for deep regret in her future life if she took the veil. She has still ideas too worldly, and she is too much attached to earthly affections, to become a good nun; she cannot contradict me, for she knows well that I am not deceived respecting her secret inclinations. If, then, she persists in her project, it is because she fears your anger. She is convinced that she cannot obtain your pardon but at the price of her obedience. Rosette knows how to bow to her lot, but she cannot receive it with satisfaction, that I warrant. That you should be unwilling to grant her hand to a handsome, young, rich, and illustrious gentleman of high lineage, is an instance of folly; but that you should oblige her, to preserve your affection, of which she has always been worthy, to renounce the world, and devote herself to the austerities of a convent, is altogether insufferable, and I therefore tell you plainly that you are a bad father".

This harsh attack, far from irritating Poliveau, appeared to restore him to self-possession. Perhaps the reproaches of his conscience had preceded those of the angry bourgeoise.

"I a bad father!" cried he; "and you, my daughter, have you entertained the same idea, even whilst yielding an obedience to my secret wish? But who should suffer more than myself from this cruel separation?—whose tears should flow more abundantly, until my eyes are dried by age, or closed by death? I am old, suffering, and wasted, trodden down in disgrace, and threatened by indigence, and I am about to face all my misfortunes in

loneliness. Of all my family there remains but one dear child, whose sight hath imparted courage, whose affection has indemnified me for all the rest—and, behold, I agree to see her no more, to bid her an eternal adieu! Who presumes, then, to suppose, if I agree to this sacrifice, that I shall not become its first and most unhappy victim?"

He checked himself, choked with sobs, and resumed, after a pause:

"Well, come what may, I shall leave it in no person's power to attach to my name the odious imputation of a bad father. There may, perhaps, be another mode than the convent supplies to restore Rosette to the good opinion of others, and her own peace of mind. My daughter, hear me, and ponder well my words. The mischievous celebrity of the unhappy transaction which has produced our misfortunes, has rendered your position wretched. Rosette Poliveau has been dishonoured by the rash proceeding of a giddy young man; she cannot reappear to the eyes of those who are aware of her misfortune without a solemn justification of her reputation. Your entry into a convent would silence calumny and efface scandal; but if that suits not your thoughts, another mode presents itself of recovering the consideration and respect of the public—seek a mate not of a condition superior to your own, but of an equal rank, and under his protection you can face the malice of those who have accused you only on appearances. For my part", continued he, casting a look at Giles Poinselot, "I know a brave youth who has never doubted your innocence, and who, I am certain, would not hesitate to bind faster the ties which already attach him to me".

"Oh! with all my soul!" cried Giles, starting up.

Rosette wished to speak.

"Hear me, again", added Poliveau with a tone of kindness; "before you decide, I wish you to understand the extent of the obligations I have contracted towards mine old apprentice. Without him, my daughter, without his attentive affection and unremitting services, your father would have ceased to exist: it is to his zeal and devotion I owe that I am now looking on you and indulging the hope that some peaceful days may yet remain for me. I am very poor, Rosette, for the suitable payment of my debt of gratitude; nevertheless, I feel certain that if you comply with my wishes, Giles will not consider me in arrear with him. He has loved you for a long time, my daughter, not with the impetuous and headstrong passion of certain gentlemen, but with the simple and modest, although deep, affection of the heart. Decide, my child —your choice is free. I shall only add some considerations which should have weight with you, as they concern my happiness:—one time or other my affairs must be arranged, and I shall resume my trade in the old house of the *Rue de la Tixeranderie*. Still I am weak and without energy; but I shall leave the management to a son-in-law who, along with you, will make matters flourish as in former times: I shall once more see the old sign of my fathers displayed above our door, and this will be to me the dearest consolation after all my griefs. This future prospect, my daughter, will offer more chances of happiness and peace than the other hopes of grandeur and pride, to which I cannot bring myself to give my approval".

The old man was silent, and again they waited with

anxiety the decision of Rosette. Whether embarrassed as to her reply, or involved in indecision, she appeared to hesitate. Giles watched her with painful anxiety.

"Rosette", cried he, "oppose not the wishes of your worthy father. Except as to the respect I owe him, he exaggerates my services: but I love you—yes, I have loved since the day I first saw you, although I have never presumed to tell you so, like others. I have always studied to please you; and if I have sought at one time to assume the bearing of a gentleman, it was because I had observed your fancy for the habits of the noblesse. Consent to become my wife; I have not fortune, family, high birth; but I will labour for you, and every moment of my life shall be employed to confirm your happiness—I promise it! I swear it!"

Rosette regarded him with an expression of deep compassion.

"I cannot be ignorant of the services you have rendered us, Giles", she said with an impressive tone, "and I fully appreciate the many excellent qualities of which you have given such high proofs. I entertain for you the warmest gratitude, and oftentimes has your name been pronounced along with my father's in the earnest prayers I have addressed to God. Therefore, Giles, my brother, friend of my childhood, do not impute an unworthy motive to the obligation under which I feel myself coerced to decline your offers. My father has told you that a mischievous celebrity has dishonoured me in the eyes of the world; I can never agree to associate in my lot an honourable and generous man, who might too late have to repent his acceptance of a share of the contumely

which falls on me. No. All I see, all I hear, can only confirm me in my first design; I can no longer belong to the world, and I shall give myself entirely to God. It must be: there is a necessity for my submission, and I shall submit, if not without a regret, at least without a complaint".

"Oh! it is not so, Rosette—it is not so!" cried poor Giles in despair. "You prefer to immure yourself in a convent for ever to giving your hand to a man whom you dislike".

La Belle Drapiere turned aside to conceal the blush which this reproach summoned to her face. Poliveau arose.

"You understand", said he to those present, "Rosette explicitly declares her true sentiments, and it is not the province of any person to contend against her conscientious scruples".

Meanwhile, Villenègre, to whom this last refusal of Rosette had restored some hope, was proceeding to insist on obtaining a reply more favourable to his desires, when La Defunctis made him a signal to be silent.

"Undoubtedly, these people have all lost their senses!" exclaimed she with her usual frankness of expression. "Be calm, M. le Marquis, and do not irritate them further by remaining against their will. All is not yet over", she continued, lowering her voice, and drawing him aside. "Between this and to-morrow we may be able to create some obstacle to this project. I suspect that this little damsel deceives us all, and herself also; I must speak with her alone. Trust in me, M. le Marquis; you know I am in your interest, and if for no other purpose

than to vex my honoured husband, who is just setting off to narrate to your father all that has occurred, I assure you this taking of the veil shall not occur, at least so soon".

"Has M. le Marquis any further orders to favour us with?" said Poliveau with ironical politeness, and bowing to Villenègre.

"It is sufficient", replied he, preparing to retire; "I leave this house, repelled, driven out. But I will know whether the inclinations of this young demoiselle are unfettered, when she declares before me her desire to enter on a religious life: if I find her sentiments responsive to mine, despite of even a father's maledictions, I swear she shall be my wife".

Having thus spoken, with a haughty salute, he departed quickly.

Leaving the residence of Poliveau, the young man became involved in the tedious labyrinth of lanes and bye-ways with which the houses and gardens of the precinct were enclosed. These localities were not very familiar to a marquis residing in the *Place Royale*; moreover the night was completely fallen, and the foliage of the trees intercepted the rays of the moon, which was rising in the horizon. Thus, still embarrassed by the violent scene in which he had been a principal actor, he was not long in losing himself in the lonely quarter which he had to cross to reach the entrance of the precinct. At last he arrived at an open place covered with grass, in the centre of which arose the towers and sharp spires of the Temple. This building looked to the east, and he was directing his steps to the great gate when a noise made by a person near him, in the shade, attracted his attention.

The stranger advanced slowly, with an irregular and unsteady pace: but what especially struck Villenègre was the voice of the individual in question, who was talking loudly to himself as drunken people do. The marquis paused and listened.

"*Palsambleu!*" said the stranger with impatience, "I shall never find this Devil's own tower of the Temple, where we are to rendezvous. Surely some Devil has carried it off to do me a spite, whilst I was winning the cash of those bourgeois. The cursed rascals had only two pistoles amongst the six, and I have spent three to fuddle them. Pah! the wretches! But where the Devil have they hid this infernal tower of the Temple?"

At this moment the drunkard, in whom we can recognize the Count de Manle, found himself at the foot of a ruined turret, which on that side formed the boundary; he stopped at once, and burst into a loud laugh.

"My word for it, I am purblind to-night!" rejoined he in broken sentences. "I am seeking the tower of the Temple, and here it is before my eyes—I can touch it!"

In fact, he was passing his hand along the ruined wall of which we have spoken.

"All's well, and my companions may find me at the rendezvous. By my faith, the grass is soft and dry, and I'll repose on it".

He sat or rather tumbled heavily upon the sod. The marquis, after being certain that it was the man whose acquaintance had been so unfortunate to him, was about to depart, when some words reached him which rivetted him to the spot.

"Yes, the little Villenègre will be enraged", continued

De Manle, who, without perceiving it, was expressing very audibly his secret reflections. "Here's a master stroke—to receive five hundred pistoles from the old duke for stealing *La Belle Drapière* from this poor marquis! Ah, ah, what a capital exploit!"

On hearing these words, of which he divined the import, Villenègre could no longer contain himself, and rushed towards the wretch to obtain an explanation. At the sound of his steps, De Manle made an unsuccessful effort to rise.

"This should be my man. Holla! comrade", cried he, "do you come on the part of Captain Corbineau?"

This question suggested to the marquis the idea of passing for the person whom De Manle was expecting, hoping thus to obtain from him some explanation on the subject most interesting to him. The substitution did not seem difficult, considering the darkness and the intoxication of the count; accordingly Villenègre did not hesitate:

"It is I", said he, disguising his voice.

"Your servant, cavalier", replied the drunken man, still endeavouring to raise himself; "I am at your orders. You are punctual; your hour was ten precisely, and it is ten now. Here we are at the tower foot. Ah! but a moment—the password, now. I should say to you—'*Au diable les nonnes!*' And you?"

"'*Au diable les nonnes!*'" repeated Villenegre mechanically.

"Hold! How simple I am!" cried De Manle, laughing. "It is you who should say—'*Au diable les nonnes*'; and I ought to reply—stay, what should I reply? Ah, yes, I have it; I answer—'*Et vive le Val des Ecoliers!*'

That's it, comrade. We now know each other, and I am ready to follow you: you are the man I seek, and I am the man you seek. Come, conduct me quickly to the spot where Captain Corbineau awaits us; I am impatient to know what they are going to do with me in this affair. Ah, there they have carried off the little Rosette:—serve the sly slut right! I shall bring her to reason; *mordieu!* you shall see. Assist me to rise, comrade; in truth, I believe I have taken too heavy a stoup of claret with these rascally bourgeois".

Villenègre, gloomy and sad, saw him twisting about at his feet without making a movement to aid him.

"*Maugrebleu!*" replied the drunken fellow, tired with his vain efforts, and remaining all at once motionless, "I know you well for a companion of this damned Corbineau, who can neither say nor do anything kind. Well, by my faith, cavalier, if you wish me to follow you, you must give me your hand, for I won't budge without help. They will carry off the fair one without us, that's all. For my part, I shall doze a little whilst you decide. Heavens! how I could sleep!"

And to prove his assertion, De Manle yawned tremendously, stretched his arms, and fell into a deep sleep. The marquis still stood over him, motionless, his arms crossed on his breast.

"What means this horrible plot?" thought he. "They wish to carry off Rosette—they have laid a trap for her. Oh, my God! can it be possible still to prevent such a frightful misfortune?"

And leaving the drunkard to snore on the grass, he set out to run at his utmost speed. Notwithstanding the dark-

ness of the night and the difficulty of the way, he rapidly traversed the distance that intervened between him and the house of Poliveau. The quarter was silent, and a lonely lamp burned in the window of the chamber occupied by the good man. This incident appeared to Villenègre to augur well. He knocked loudly at the gate, and without taking time to reply to the person who opened it, he dashed up the stairs, and rapidly passed the two stories. The old man's door was open, he pushed it roughly and entered.

Poliveau was seated in a large arm-chair, his face concealed in both his hands, a prey to a violent fit of despair. Near him, Giles Poinselot standing with tearful eyes, was addressing some words of consolation: both, on seeing the young marquis, started with astonishment.

"Young man", cried Poliveau, with indignant sorrow, "do you come again to insult the grief of a father who has embraced his idolized daughter for the last time?"

"She is gone, then?" demanded the marquis, casting round him a searching look.

"And what matters it to you?" said Giles passionately, and advancing towards him. "We are all tired of your obstinacy in pursuing Mademoiselle Rosette, and I declare——"

"It concerns not you or me, but herself—herself alone. For Heaven's sake, tell me is she long gone? Who accompanied her? Where did she go?"

Giles was about to reply with spirit, but his master, who from the mysterious manner of the marquis suspected some fresh disaster, made a sign for him to be silent, and answered in a trembling voice:

"She has left a few minutes since to return to the convent; she was accompanied by Madame Defunctis, and they are in a hired carriage which attended them to the gate. But can I know——"

"You can only know that she is, perhaps, already in the hands of wicked men capable of every crime; and it devolves upon those who love her to fly to her rescue".

"Unhappy!—can it be possible?"

"Explain yourself, monsieur".

"I have not time, and as yet I have myself only suspicions; but there is not a moment to lose. You, Monsieur Giles, hurry to the *Lieutenant Criminel* Defunctis; tell him to muster all the force at his disposal, and to scour the quarters surrounding the Temple. Or rather", continued he, with an air of deep reflection, "beg of him to send to the *Val des Ecoliers*. This name should have some particular signification. To rouse the zeal of the magistrate, tell him that his wife runs a very considerable risk. You, M. Poliveau, will pray to God whilst we are endeavouring to save your unhappy child".

And he moved as to depart.

"Monsieur le Marquis", cried the old man, overwhelmed with terror, "have pity on a father's grief. What know you in reference to Rosette?"

"I know she is in danger of being carried off by a miscreant adventurer, and that she can belong neither to religion nor to me, unless we rescue her from the hands of her enemies!"

At the same moment he disappeared in the darkness, and they heard him descending the stairs with hurried

step. As he arrived at the tower foot, the tower clock struck ten.

"It will be too late", said he.

He proceeded with the utmost quickness towards the spot where he had left De Maule asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

THE adieus of the father and daughter had been heart-rending. Poliveau with the stoicism which he evinced in his naturally firm character, in his strict notions of the honour of his family, and in his religious feelings, had hitherto appeared unmoved, although he had separated from Rosette with the conviction that he would never behold her again; but after the departure of the young girl, his courage ebbed, and he mingled his tears with those of the faithful apprentice, until the appearance of Villenègre suddenly imparted a new direction to his thoughts.

At the time when Rosette and her companion quitted the house, the most profound darkness prevailed in this portion of the precinct of the Temple. They resumed their masks, and regained their hired carriage, which had remained at some distance under the trees of the yard. Giles Poinselot had desired to escort them to the carriage to defend them from any insult, but at the house door Rosette besought him earnestly to return at once to her father, whose poignant affliction she could penetrate under

his apparent calmness; and the apprentice obeyed, after having solicited in his abject sorrow the permission to assist at the ceremony of taking the veil, which was to take place the next morning at the Convent *de l'Ave Maria*. At the approach of these females, the heavy door that distinguished these primitive vehicles, to which they have at a later period given the name of *fiacres*, was quickly opened, and a hoarse voice, which might be presumed to be that of the coachman who had previously driven them, directed them to mount. The shade was so thick around that they could not distinguish the individual who assisted them to their seats; besides, they were both so strongly, although differently, excited by the scene which had just occurred, that they were incapable of any reflection upon that which was succeeding. As soon as they were seated, the door was closed, the whip was applied, and the unwieldy machine was set in motion more speedily than could be expected from the appearance of the two wretched hacks which were yoked to it.

If, meanwhile, these poor females had minds more at ease, or if the night had been less dark, they might have remarked that the coachman's seat was occupied by two mysterious looking men, who sought to conceal their features by slouching their hats over their eyes, whilst behind the vehicle two men held on like footmen, who were completely shrouded with cloaks. But at this period, public lighting had not been introduced, and the want of carriage lamps produced no remark, and except some lights which still shone at a distance in the taverns, there was nothing to betray the presence of these strangers. Perhaps the unusual appearance of this equipage might attract

the attention of the guards who kept the entrance of the Temple; but, whether by accident or design, at the moment the carriage passed beneath the arch which afforded access to the precinct, the archers of the Grand Prior were sleeping in their guard chamber. The gate was open, and a solitary lamp lighted the passage. The carriage issued forth without impediment, and was soon rolling through the fœtid mire of the unpaved streets, and penetrating the old and miserable quarters which then extended on the east of Paris. Neither of them as yet perceived that they had not taken the proper route to the Convent *de l'Ave Maria*. Rosette was weeping in silence on the back seat of the carriage, and the kind lady who took such a sincere part in her griefs was sobbing along with her; still these manifestations of woe did not weaken the anger which had been excited by the stern determination of the father and daughter.

"Aye, aye, let us weep like two Magdalens", said she, with a singular mixture of acerbity and kindness, "and you will see if this deluge will afford any remedy. As I hope to be saved, I have never seen an old man so headstrong and impenetrable, or a damsel more foolish or of higher notions! And since when, pretty one, have you imbibed this passion for a convent? Is it then so delightful in your eyes to become a *religieuse*, and to pass your life behind the iron bars of a cloister? For my part, I declare I could not live beyond three days behind the grate".

"Mademoiselle", cried Rosette, "have you not comprehended that the pardon and love of my father were to be had only at this price?"

"Eh! what will you make of the one and the other when you have pronounced the vows, and can no longer see your father or any other person?" demanded the matter-of-fact Defunctis. "But listen, my young friend: I shall acknowledge one thing to you—I have taken it into my head that you will never be a nun, and you never will! I would far prefer still to see you marry this poor devil of an apprentice, who truly has gained my pity. I indulged the hope this evening, in conducting you to your father, that all would end well; and it was for that purpose I sent intelligence to the young M. de Villenègre. All my projects have failed through your obstinacy, but I do not account myself beaten yet—of that I warn you. I go to request a bed for this night from my relative, the abbess of *Ave Maria*, for it is too late to return home. We shall talk seriously over it once more, and it may well happen that I make you change your intention".

"Ah! how can I, mademoiselle? For every reason, for my own sake, should not this sacrifice be accomplished? Oh! for Heaven's sake, cease to struggle against my fixed destiny; you have done enough, and perhaps too much, for a poor creature who abandons herself. What avails your goodness to one who utterly despairs?"

"It avails more than you suppose", replied the lady boldly. "Listen, my pet", continued she in a confidential and affectionate tone, "I could tell you that I love you greatly, and that I would not wish to see you unhappy—because for the past year I am as a mother to you: but I have other reasons for opposing to the utmost of my power this headlong course you are inclined to take.

First, I have told you that I have hearkened to the young M. de Villenègre, who, unable to see you himself at the convent, was coming every instant to speak to me concerning you; next, I know that your resolution will cause very great satisfaction to certain persons, whom I should not be disinclined to annoy a little".

"Good Heavens!—to whom?"

"First, to my husband, Monsieur *le Lieutenant Criminel*, with whom I have had daily disputes on your account. You must know, my dear friend, that M. Defunctis attempts to treat his wife like the soldiers of the *Prevôté*, and to insist on being obeyed everywhere and always. You understand that I resist to the utmost of my power, and I am not at all indisposed to have my own way occasionally. Thus M. Defunctis wishes to pay his court to the old Duke de Villenegre, whom I cannot bear, and I suspect that they have contrived something between them to prevent you from ever marrying the marquis".

"Can that be true?" cried Rosette, astonished. Then she added, sighing, "What matters it? They will soon have no more to fear from me: to-morrow I shall give them no further uneasiness".

"Aye", said the dame bitterly, "and the old duke will leap for joy, all weak and gouty though he be; the duchess who, they tell me, has become childish, will recover her reason at once on hearing these tidings; and M. Defunctis, who will remain in favour closely with them, will grow more important and insufferable than ever. I detest these Villenègres, always excepting the young marquis, and I wish to tell you the reason, my dear child—you shall judge:—

"It will be two years next St. John's day since they gave a grand banquet, and my husband was invited. For a long time I had desired to see a stylish entertainment amongst persons of quality, and I managed so well that M. Defunctis consented to take me with him. He wore his robe and his collar of state; as for me, I wore my velvet hooped petticoat, my lace cap with lappets, my necklace of pearls—my faith! but you would have thought me a real princess. My husband mounted his mule, and took me behind him, as is the custom; so we went in great style to the *Place Royale*. The approaches of the *Hotel de Villenègre* were thronged with carriages, and the court was full of pages and lackeys. Would you believe that those rascals, at the moment we arrived at the horse-block, began to comment impertinently on us and our equipage—so much so, that my husband was on the point of sending for forcible means of bringing the low scum to their senses: one of them carried his insolence so far as to say quite aloud that, in dismounting from my mule, I had shown my garters. It was a calumny, my dear, although the garters might very well be shown, for they were of flame coloured taffety, fringed with silver, and had cost me full two crowns *tournois*, at the sign of Sainte Genevieve in the *Rue Bourg l'Abbe*".

Here the angry bourgeoise was compelled to stop, for she had spoken with such volubility that her breath failed her. Rosette, who had relapsed into a reverie, answered by a common-place interjection.

"You are well aware, my dearest friend, that I know the world too well to mind what may be said by a pack of menials. Every one knows that these pages and lackeys

are incorrigible, and that the parliament has lost its time and labour in attempting to curb their insolence: M. Defunctis himself, all *Lieutenant Criminel* as he is, could not put an end to it—and the insult they offered us that day is a proof. But there is a saying—"Like master, like man"; and if I mention the offensive conduct of these clowns, it is that you may better comprehend the pride and arrogance of those whom they serve.

"At last we enter the mansion in the midst of their uproar, and ascend a large, superb staircase. You may suppose I kept myself all right, and assumed the best countenance possible. A double leaved door opened, and we were ushered into a large apartment, where they had so many lords and ladies covered with gold and diamonds, that I was dazzled. My head became confused, and I know not how I got through the salutation. The duke and duchess were at the far extremity of the apartment, erect, and stiff as stakes, and they scarcely vouchsafed us a nod when we all saluted them with every formality of fashion. As for me, I began to recite in my best manner, to the mistress of the house, a very handsome compliment which I had purchased from a wit of our neighbourhood, and which, by the bye, had cost me half a crown, when the wretched old baggage interrupted me all at once, saying, with a gesture of assumed majesty:

'That will do, my dear, I forgive you the remainder; at your age the memory is insufficient for the recital of the entire lesson'.

"And all the puppies and gossips laughing round us! My husband became scarlet with shame; as for me, I was ready to tear the eyes out of the saucy creature, although

at a later period I became convinced that the person who could offer such rudeness to strangers, must have been astray in her wits. We betook ourselves to a corner through the midst of taunts. But this was not the only insult that the haughty duchess made me undergo; during the whole of the repast, I remarked that she noticed me in a sneering manner to some great ladies of her acquaintance, and it appeared to me that they amused themselves vastly with the air and manners of an honest bourgeoise who was astray in such high company: as if a bourgeoise was not worth——"

Here the talkativeness of la Defunctis was interrupted by Rosette. By the transient light of a link carried by a person passing, she happened to notice that the carriage was going through remote and unfrequented streets.

"Mademoiselle", she said timidly, raising the curtain of leather which served to close the vehicle (for carriages then were not furnished with glass), "it seems to me that the coachman has not taken the road to the convent, and that we have got into a very lonely place".

"Don't be uneasy, my chick", answered the bourgeoise with indifference, "you may be sure this way is shorter than the ordinary route. But to resume the narrative of my unpleasant adventures with these Villenègres".

"Hush!" replied the young girl, lowering her voice and shuddering, "have you remarked, mademoiselle, those men who occupy the back of the carriage?"

"They are surely some friends of the driver, or poor devils who take advantage of the opportunity of making their way without fatigue to their quarter. Do not be

frightened in the least at such a matter, my young friend; you will not be worthy of becoming the wife of such an accomplished gentlemen as the Marquis de Villenègre".

"His wife!" repeated Rosette in a stifled tone, "I shall never be his wife, and that you well know".

"I know no such thing", said the obstinate bourgeoise, shaking her head: "but hold, my dear child, for the conclusion of my tale. In two words, I must tell you that on the day of which I speak, I received from this old blockhead of a duke, and this old toothless duchess, every kind of incivility; but one polite attention on the part of their son remains in my memory, and I shall be happy to prove to him that I recollect it. Would you believe that he had the kindness to hand me to the door of the saloon when we were retiring?—and that in the presence of the mockers!—then he saluted us with so much grace that I could have embraced him with all my heart. True it is he did the same honour to other ladies who were present at the banquet, and that, afterwards, when I have spoken to him of this circumstance, he did not recollect it: but I have ever thought that he wished by this attention to compensate for the bad reception of the duke and duchess. But, be it as it may, I like the son as much as I detest the father and mother; and I shall not be at all sorry to gall those two old miserly beings, who would burst with vexation if they knew that their son was destined to marry a bourgeoise. As for my husband, who seconds them in their haughty follies—but no matter, our differences only concern him and me. As for you, my dearest friend, it is necessary whilst we are here alone

that I should address a final question to you, and I implore of you to answer in the full sincerity of your soul: promise that you will".

"I do promise, my dear and generous benefactress. Have you not a right to my entire confidence?"

"That is very proper: but the matter concerns yourself; and since you can speak with perfect freedom, I think that you will not disguise the truth. You know that the marquis loves you to distraction—to insanity; for you he has incurred the ill-will of his family, the railleries of his friends; but there remains still a point for me to clear up, although I have in reference to it a violent suspicion, amounting nearly to a certainty. You, my child, do you love him?"

Rosette was silent.

"Recollect that you have promised to be frank!"

"Mademoiselle", replied *La Belle Drapiere*, with an effort, "to what purpose can my answer serve, when my destiny is determined?"

"It will serve to prove that you can keep your promises. Answer, I beseech you".

There ensued again a silence, during which nothing was heard except the rolling of the wheels on the pavement.

"Mademoiselle", at last said Rosette, "it would be difficult for me to continue insensible to the affection, to the devotion, of which M. de Villenègre has afforded me such great proofs since the fatal night when my griefs commenced, and if an abyss did not yawn between us, caused by our duties and the difference of our conditions——"

"But, one word for all, do you love him or not?"

"Alas! have you not discovered it?" murmured Rosette, shrouding her face, as if her blushes were not sufficiently concealed by the darkness and her veil. At this moment, so important in the conversation of the travellers, the carriage suddenly stopped, the persons who accompanied them jumped down, and they were obliged to pay every attention to what was passing round them. They raised with alarm the curtains of leather, which answered the purpose of windows, and perceived that they were not at all at the gate of the convent where Rosette lived, but in a place that appeared totally unknown.

It was a kind of cross-road, wide and open, bordered by bare walls, beyond which some orchards appeared; the houses were few and scattered in the enclosed space which lay alongside the public road. The carriage had stopped before a Gothic building, surmounted by an elevated belfry, and by the moonlight which shone upon the upper part of the portal, there appeared stone statues, architectural roses, colonettes, and all the usual indications characterizing a church of ancient foundation. The utmost silence prevailed in this quarter; not a lamp gleamed from a window, not a passenger loitered or hurried along the road-side, and, except the carriage which was stationed in the midst of the highway, and a group of gloomy and mysterious looking men, who were whispering a few paces distant, there was nothing to denote that this portion of the city was inhabited.

"Where are we? good Heavens!" cried La Defunctis, "this sot of a coachman has mistaken his way. Come here, scoundrel", said she, addressing a person wrapped

in an ample cloak, and whom, up to the present moment she had taken for the real driver, "did I not plainly tell you, rascal, that we were returning to the convent de l'Ave Maria, in the *Rue des Barres?* Come, take your place on the box, and hasten to leave us at our destination, or I shall stop some portion of the hire we agreed on".

But, to her thorough astonishment, the person she addressed never stirred, and remained listening to another individual, who appeared to be the leader of the party, and who was issuing orders in a low tone. Presently one man separated from the group, and hurried off rapidly, as if he was going on a pressing occasion. The others approached the carriage.

"Mercy!, what do they mean to do with us?" cried Rosette, in anguish. "For what end have they brought us here?"

"I hope they entertain no evil design against us?" replied Defunctis, raising her voice so as to be heard by all around. "These people well know that I am the wife of the *Lieutenant Criminel* of the Short Robe, and that they will play a bad game——"

"Peace!" interrupted the hoarse voice of the driver, who was no other than the Captain Corbineau, "no one wishes to harm you, only, if you utter a single cry to give an alarm, or if you do not do what is expected of you, you shall die".

And he flashed before the eyes of the poor terrified females the blade of a dagger; they cast themselves back in the vehicle, and clung trembling to each other.

"I cannot comprehend this pass to which we have arrived", quickly said Rosette's companion in a low tone,

so as not to disobey the threatening order that had been given, "and I am ignorant even of the place where we are".

"Mademoiselle", answered Rosette in the same tone, "that God and His saints may have pity on us! I fear that we have fallen into some dreadful snare, although I know not who would have any interest in our misfortunes. As to where we are, I believe I know the old church before us; it is that of *Sainte Catherine du Val des Ecoliers*. I recognize at once the statue of the good king St. Louis, which surmounts the portal. I have frequently attended mass in this church, when we lived a few paces off in the *Rue de la Tixeranderie*".

"The church of St. Catherine", repeated La Defunctis, with an air of sudden recollection. "Listen, then: there must be here some horrible plot!

"Oh! if I could apprize my dear Barnabè of the danger that threatens his unfortunate wife", said the bourgeoise in despair. "These Villenègres are capable of anything".

At this moment the man who had been sent forward returned, and when he had spoken a few words, the carriage resumed its motion slowly. This was a new occasion of fright for the poor captives, who entertained the direst apprehensions; but the vehicle again stopped when it had turned a corner of the church, the door opened, and they directed the ladies to alight.

"But where are you bringing us?" demanded the wife of the magistrate in terror.

"You are soon to see".

"But——"

Before she could urge any objection two lusty arms seized and conveyed her to the ground. On feeling the brutal grasp, the poor woman uttered a piercing shriek that resounded through the deep silence of night. Corbineau, alarmed, raised his dagger over her to compel her to silence. Rosette, dismayed, stretched her hand to protect her friend, whose life she believed to be in danger, but her strength failed, and she fell in a swoon at the bottom of the vehicle, whilst la Defunctis was tottering in a state but little better.

Without loss of time one of the ruffians seized upon the insensible young female, whilst the others hurried on her companion. They lightly knocked at a side door of the church; it opened instantly, and when the entire party had entered, it closed again with a harsh noise that resounded through the extensive recesses of the dark edifice.

The interior of the church, at this hour of night, presented an appearance striking and majestic, which ought to have impressed its profaners with respect. The struggling moonbeams passing through the stained glass of the oriel window, served only to render the darkness more impressive, and still as the sight became more accustomed to the gloom, they could discern the lofty arches and graceful columns that sustained the vaulted roof. In the aisles, they saw here and there across the dark shadows that intervened, the marble statues that ornamented the tombs, appearing like menacing spectres. The light of a solitary lamp flickered at the sanctuary, and from the other extremity of the nave it might be likened to a star. An atmosphere cold and damp, still impregnated with the latest perfumes of the incense burned during the day, cir-

culated heavily through the place, and produced an involuntary shivering. In this immense and resonant building, each step, however light, produced an echo, each word pronounced in a whisper passed into the distant recesses with a moaning sound.

The person who carried Rosette laid her, still inanimate, upon the seat of a pew in a side chapel, and in a peremptory tone ordered la Defunctis to assist her companion. The bourgeoise was incapable of thinking or acting for herself, so much was she overwhelmed by the events of the last few minutes; nevertheless, she obeyed mechanically, and advanced towards the young girl whose long garment of a novice made her look like a white apparition. The stranger retired to his companion, who was muttering at some paces distant.

"Is M. l'Abbé ready?" asked he of the person who had opened the door, and whose features the darkness prevented from being seen: "I hope he will not fail to attend; the duke would never forgive him".

"M. l'Abbé is already in the sacristy", answered the mysterious person addressed in a nasal tone, "and he will be at the altar at the time the duke pleases".

"That is enough; go and tell him to prepare the deed, leaving a blank for the names. I suspect that the coming husband is not anxious that his real name should be known, and he can insert it himself when all is over".

The man who had admitted them obeyed this order, and they could hear the noise of his tread on the flags gradually die away in the distance.

"We want now only the bridegroom", resumed the ast speaker, and who was no other than Mignon, the con-

fidential valet of the Duke de Villenègre; "are you certain, captain, that he is coming?"

"*Ventrebleu!*—am I sure!" answered the rough voice of Corbineau. "Our comrade will not fail to attend when the business relates to gaining some pistoles, and going through what he calls a genteel adventure. I have sent him one of my friends, who ought to find him at the rendezvous agreed on. Pestilence seize me, if I can comprehend why they are not here long ago".

These words, uttered in a hoarse and hollow voice, intermingled with imprecations, awakened in a doleful manner the echoes of the church; and those who heard them could not avoid being affected by a feeling of dismay. The valet-de-chambre replied in a low tone:

"Do not swear, captain—I believe you without that. But whilst waiting the arrival of the Count de Manle, cannot you say a few words to these women about the business: you know that I cannot appear in the matter, for fear of compromising my employer".

"Be it so; I shall go and explain the affair in the most elegant terms possible", replied Corbineau with a villainous laugh.

And he advanced with a heavy step towards the females. At this moment Rosette began to recover her consciousness, and, with difficulty, raising herself in the arms of her companion, she was dismayed at the silence and darkness that prevailed.

"Well, my little pet", said Corbineau roughly, placing himself before her, "are you recovering? If you were my wife, the Devil should have me before I would permit these swoonings!"

"Where am I?—who is speaking to me?" inquired the poor creature in a feeble voice.

"A friend is beside you", whispered the wife of the *Lieutenant Criminel*: "collect your thoughts".

"What is their object?—why am I here?" repeated Rosette, still bewildered.

Corbineau took on himself to reply.

"You are in a church, and they are going to have you married. Come, prepare yourself, my pretty Rosette, and pray a word or two, if you are willing to conduct yourself devoutly through the ceremony. Your bridegroom is a little too tardy, but he cannot fail to arrive: I suspect", continued he, as if speaking to himself, "that this drunkard has drowned his memory in a flagon of hippocras".

"My God! is not all this a dream?" cried Mademoiselle Poliveau with a deep sigh.

"It is usually a very pleasant dream when there is a wedding in question", replied the scoundrel sneeringly. "Now that you know what is on foot, be wise and weep no more; you see perfectly that no one wishes to harm you".

And he turned on his heel as if to retire, but la Defunctis, who had by little and little recovered from her previous fright, called him back, and said with some degree of boldness:

"One moment, Monsieur Stranger; I begin to understand this which they desire concerning this unhappy young creature, and I see plainly they count on sacrificing her to the boundless apprehensions of a proud old dotard; but can you tell me why I am brought here—I, the wife of the *Lieutenant Criminel* of the Short Robe?"

"*Parbleu!* mademoiselle", answered Corbineau in a jocose tone, "it is because they could not do otherwise; and, besides, they thought a respectable witness would not damage the affair".

"But do you know that my husband will avenge the injury you do us, and if he catches you——"

"*Le Lieutenant Criminel* Defunctis does not require a fresh inducement to incite him to take, dead or alive, a certain person whom they call Captain Cutthroat".

"Captain Cutthroat!" repeated the bourgeoise shuddering. "What!—this bold adventurer on whose head there is a price?"

"I am the person. Now that you know me, do not dream of irritating me".

The notorious name of the bold robber who stood before her, caused the poor lady to relapse into all her terrors. Still, ashamed to yield to personal fears when her friend was in such great danger and incapable of protecting herself, she replied in a steady voice:

"Hear me, captain: I shall say nothing to my husband, and I shall so manage that you shall not be called to account for your proceedings this evening, if you are disposed to act fairly. I know the person who employs you, and I know for what purpose they wish to marry this poor girl, without her consent, to a wretch unworthy of her. Well, I can assure you that this violence is unnecessary; in the morning this young female intends to take the veil in a convent of a most austere order, and, consequently, she will not be able to marry any person".

"Can that be true?" demanded Corbineau, surprised.

"Why the Devil, then, do they give us a thousand pistoles?"

"Women's artifices!" murmured the valet-de-chambre, who had approached to listen. "There never was a word of this communicated to monseigneur, and it is only an invention of this gossip. Cannot you comprehend that they wish to gain time, and that to-morrow it will be impossible to do what we leave undone to-day? Let the women talk as they may, captain, it is for us to execute the orders we have received".

"But they cannot marry a young female thus contrary to her inclinations", cried the bourgeoise with firmness: "they cannot make her wed, without the consent of her relatives, or the presence of her friends, a man whom she does not know, and has never seen".

"Why, it cannot be but that she knows the Count de Manle".

"The Count de Manle!—he who pillaged the warehouse of Poliveau!"

"Better to die!" screamed Rosette with energy. "The most fearful tortures shall never compel me to accept him at the altar".

"They will manage without your consent".

"But what sacrilegious priest would dare without my assent——"

"Trust me, mademoiselle, every thing is looked to. It is necessary to deprive you this night of your liberty, in order that you may not make a bad use of it at a later period. Learn to submit to your fate, and you may depend upon being compensated for the grief you now experience".

Rosette remained overwhelmed; her companion did not attempt to argue with too great warmth, since she found what a notorious ruffian was the chief director of the proceeding. At this moment there was a knocking at the side door.

"Here they are at last", cried Corbineau, turning to the side.

Two men wrapped in their cloaks made their way into the church. One of them had a tottering step, and leaned upon his companion to avoid falling; he was heard to stumble in the darkness at each step.

"Hell and furies!" said Corbineau to the person who seemed to act as guide, "you come very late; I feared you had not met with the man you sought".

"It is not my fault, captain", answered the other peevishly; "this gentleman came dead drunk to the rendezvous, and he could only with the utmost difficulty be got to give me the password: I have, in a great degree, carried him thus far".

"It is a calumny", interrupted de Manle with an altered voice, "and this young cur lies like a scoundrel. I am in my senses, and can march like one of the king's arquebusiers: I have drunk one glass of hippocras with the bourgeois—that's all".

"Come, come, he will have sufficient reason left to do what is required of him", said Corbineau. "Well, brother", continued he, addressing himself to de Manle, "are you ready to wed the person in question?"

"To wed?' repeated de Manle quite confounded.

"Eh, have you not perceived, comrade, what was intended for you? You cannot complain that we have

failed in our agreement: you run no risk, and the adventure ought to seem to you merry and amusing. They give you five hundred pistoles, and the pretty Rosette Poliveau: what a lucky rascal you are!"

Whether through astonishment or intoxication, de Manle made no reply.

"Well, do you agree?" demanded Corbineau, impatient at his silence.

"Yes, yes", said the adventurer in a strange accent. "But where, then, is this priceless pearl?" continued he in his usual jargon, "the charming, angelic Rosette".

"She is there", replied the captain, pointing to the females. "Let us see, my fine fellow—direct your attentions to overcome her last scruples, whilst they inform the priest of your arrival. You will have occasion for all your gallantry, I forewarn you, for the fair one is fierce as a tigress".

"We will see that", replied de Manle with a foppish air; "all these tigresses are tamed easily".

He turned his staggering steps towards the ladies, who trembled with terror, and began to speak to them in a low voice; but immediately they judged from the stir in the direction of the sacristy, that the ceremony was about to begin.

A marriage concluded under similar circumstances, against the will of one of the parties, and immediately consequent on a nocturnal abduction, would appear in the times we live in an impossibility; but at the period to which this narrative refers—a period when law possessed no vigour, when the will of some men in high position prevailed over right the most legitimate, when authority

was powerless to repress scandalous abuses, exactions, and crimes, of which the entire of France was the theatre—nothing was more easy than acts of this nature, and the history of the time is full of examples which we could adduce. If a ruined gentleman was desirous of marrying a rich heiress, he carried her off by force, and conducted her to some place where a degraded priest was in readiness to celebrate the marriage ceremony; afterwards, if the family of the unhappy female wished to institute any judicial proceedings against such violence, the legality of the union was proved by suborned witnesses and false or extorted documents; and, in all such cases, the interminable processes only served to reflect dishonour on both families. These *mariages forcès*, as they were termed, became so frequent, and were carried to such an excess, that in 1639, twenty years after the events of which we are treating, a royal *ordonnance* was found necessary to repress them, under most severe penalties.

This ceremony, which according to our modern ideas would appear only a mere formality by no means in accordance with prescribed rules, seemed then most solemn and important to Rosette Poliveau and la Defunctis. There remained to them but little hope that the priest whose ministry they were about to employ in this sacrilege would take notice of the tears and protestations of the poor young girl. We are already aware that the Abbe *de Sainte Catherine du Val des Ecoliers* was totally in dependence on the Dukes de Villenègre; and in fact at this period the ecclesiastical benefices were given to lay lords who frequently transmitted them to their heirs. To perform the functions appertaining to chapels, churches,

priories, etc., which composed these benefices, these lordly usurpers would hire poor priests termed *confidentiares* or *custodi-nos*, whom they pressed to the utmost to swell their own incomes. It thus can be understood that the *confidentiare* was always in the power of his lord and master, who could exact from him more or less from the farming, if we may use the expression, of his church. Thus, such was precisely the situation of the Abbè de Saint Catherine in connection with the Duke de Villenègre; and surely the ecclesiastic capable of making such a bargain, ought to be capable of doing every thing that would require less labour. Moreover, the canons who possessed the cloisters of *Saint Catherine du Val des Ecoliers* were not then of the best repute, since, in a short time after, they were subjected to a strict reform by the Cardinal de Rochefoucauld.

Rosette suspected as much; nevertheless, when the priest issued at last from the sacristy, vested in his sacerdotal habits, and preceded by a beadle, who carried a lighted wax taper, she did not hesitate to make a desperate attempt. She arose quickly, and crossed the church to meet him. He was a thin, pale man, with smooth hair, of a mean figure that did not fill the sacred costume with which he was attired; an expression of deep hypocrisy pervaded his countenance; he held in his hand a prayer book, and proceeded slowly along, reciting some prayers. All the persons present followed Rosette, some of them sneering, and others shrugging their shoulders with an air of compassion. The young girl threw herself in the way of the priest, and when she found herself within the small sphere lighted by the taper carried before

him, she addressed him with respect, but also with firmness:

"Father, I beg of you to pardon my boldness, and may God pardon me if I err, but if any one has told you that the marriage to which you are about to lend the aid of your holy office takes place with my consent, they have deceived you—I have been dragged here suddenly and forcibly. Avoid committing a sacrilege of which you, I, and all who participate by their presence, must bear the fearful consequences. I implore you, then, in the name of that Blessed One who sees and hears us, to sustain me against the criminal designs of those who have brought me here. To-morrow I was to enter into religious life in the Convent of *Ave Maria*; already I belong to God, and if you afford your countenance to machinations plotted against a poor, defenceless girl, you will have to answer for it, not only before the Heavenly justice, but before your ecclesiastical superiors on Earth".

These words seemed to make an impression on him to whom they were addressed. He remained a moment silent and confused by this appeal, which certainly was unexpected; but a signal from the confidential valet of the duke appeared to revive his resolution.

"My daughter", he answered with a voice of affected mildness and humility, "what you say may be true, but it is not for me to oppose the wishes of those who are placed above me. I have no temporal authority; I am only a weak instrument made use of by the powerful—and obedience is my duty. Moreover, you are too young to determine on what is just and prudent, and it is hard for you to appreciate thoroughly the high designs of those

who at this moment are disposing of your destiny; learn, therefore, resignation, and leave the rest to Providence. Follow me to the altar, and implore the mercy of God, who never abandons His true followers".

It had been easy for Rosette, simple though she was, to confute this extraordinary theology which subjected the lot of the weak to the caprices of the great; but having spoken these words, the priest directed his steps towards the choir, muttering prayers as he went.

"Monsieur, have pity on me", cried the young girl following him; "if you knew what grief my unfortunate father will experience, when he is apprized of the horrible perfidy of which I am the victim! For your own sake, for the quiet of your conscience whilst living, and for the salvation of your soul hereafter, permit not these people to perpetrate so foul a crime!"

But the hypocrite continued to move with slow and measured pace, muttering the holy prayers which his impure lips profaned.

"It is an abomination, this!" cried the good Defunctis, unable to command her indignation; "and this scandalous priest—this infamous *custodi-nos*——"

"Silence!" interrupted Captain Corbineau roughly.

The poor creature was silent instantly, terrified by his awful voice. They proceeded towards the principal altar, where every thing had been prepared for the ceremony. Already Rosette had been conveyed thither, almost by force, by de Maule, whose intoxication seemed suddenly to have been dissipated by the importance of the circumstances and the place, and now, kneeling before the priest vested in his stole, they waited the nuptial benediction.

Only two tapers shed a feeble and straggling light upon the principal group, whilst the rest of the party, and the bourgeoise herself, who had fallen on her knees upon a flagstone of the sanctuary, were in comparative darkness.

The ceremony commenced. At first Rosette sobbed, and frequently turned her head, as if to protest by her looks against the violence in question but presently de Manle addressed to her some words in a low tone which seemed to calm her instantly. Perhaps, moved by her grief, he had promised her to regard this marriage as a mere form; perhaps she had perceived that her complaints and resistance served only to irritate the agents of the duke; but, at all events, the young girl seemed to fall into a state of stupid quiescence. The bye-standers, who had witnessed her despair only a moment before, were surprised at this calm—the result, perhaps, of the failure of her strength at the most critical moment. The bourgeoise could not account to herself for this resignation, and began seriously to think that *La Belle Drapiere* had changed her mind all at once, and had reflected that even such a husband as the Count de Manle was preferable to a life in a convent. The ceremony was brief, for at this hour, rather advanced in the night, it was not possible to have mass said, and it was limited to the nuptial benediction; but when the moment arrived for addressing the usual questions to the pair, and when the Count de Manle was about to pronounce the important "yes", there was a loud knocking at the principal door of the church, and a summons in a loud and authoritative voice was heard.

"Open, in the king's name".

"It is my husband, accompanied by the soldiers of the

guard!" cried Defunctis starting up. "God sends him here; God would not permit this horrible sacrilege to be accomplished in His holy temple!"

The priest stopped in trepidation.

"Do not stir—speak not a word, mademoiselle", cried the valet in a tone of command addressed to the bourgeoise. "Captain Corbineau, take charge of this old fool, and see that she gives no alarm. And you, M. l'Abbé", continued he, addressing the ecclesiastic, "go on, and hasten; all will be over before the king's authority can penetrate here".

Corbineau went to stand beside poor Defunctis, who could no longer oppose his will. The priest applied himself to obey the order thus issued; but such was the din outside, and the confusion amongst the inferior fellows who flocked round Mignon, that the responses of Rosette could not be heard. The priest, however, attached no great importance to her responses; for, without stopping, he muttered over the words with all the haste that fear and an anxiety to satisfy the wishes of his employer could impart.

At last all the usual ceremonies were ended. The symbolic ring had been placed on the bride's finger, the pair had received the blessing, and the last "amen" had been pronounced by the beadle: nothing was wanting, according to the opinions of that period, to prevent the marriage being valid before God and man. As the priest was leaving the altar, the valet-de-chambre, without being intimidated by the noise made by the archers outside the door, cried out in a tone of thorough satisfaction:

"Let all present bear witness that Rosette Poliveau is

well and duly married to this gentleman, and that whilst he lives she cannot marry any other person. Now we may make way for these *Messieurs de la Prevotè*. M. de Manle, you can convey your wife wherever you choose".

"Open!" cried another voice at the church door; "open! a father comes to claim his child?"

"Hear you that? it is my father!" said Rosette, endeavouring to rush towards the door.

De Manle restrained her, and addressed to her some whispered sentences. At this moment the entire church resounded with the blows struck on the door with halberd staves and musket butts; the creatures of the duke, of whom many, like Corbineau, had to dread the investigations of justice, began to evince some consternation. All this time the valet de chambre was busying himself in obtaining the signatures of the bystanders, and even of Madame Defunctis, to the deed of marriage which the abbè had previously prepared.

Suddenly the door of the sacristy opened, and a man out of breath rushed towards the lighted portion of the choir. Mignon recognized at once this new comer, who wore the full livery of Villenègre.

"Well—what now, Comtois?" asked he with evident surprise.

"The duke is dying", replied the messenger. "The clergyman who is attending his last moments—a worthy man, to whom he has acknowledged every thing—has prevailed on him to change his designs. Monseigneur sends me hither in haste to countermand his former directions, and to desire that you permit the young girl to

depart: a carriage is at the wicket of the convent to conduct her wherever she wishes".

"It is too late", said the valet in a grave tone; "the marriage finished, and the family of Villenègre is saved, despite the weakness of its chief. Here is the deed", continued he, addressing the count, and presenting to him the paper on which he had inscribed his signature; "you have only to fill up the blanks—to sign yourself, and obtain the signature of your wife".

"I shall take charge of it", said de Manle with singular energy. "But let us hasten to be off; Defunctis and the king's people are very impatient".

"This way!—this way!" said the bewildered abbè pointing to the sacristy, which communicated with the convent.

They betook themselves hastily in that direction.

"Where do you lead me?—good Heavens!" said Rosette on finding herself carried off by a vigorous arm.

There was no reply; and presently there was no one in the church except Defunctis, whom they appeared to have forgotten in their precipitate retreat. The good lady at first remained uncertain as to what she should do, fancying continually that she heard the formidable voice of Captain Cutthroat in her ear; at length, perceiving that she was alone, and that the archers continued to knock violently, she hastened to admit them. The soldiers rushed into the church carrying torches, which diffused a brilliant light around; Defunctis, robed and vested with every mark of his office, was at their head; after him came the good man Poliveau, quite pale and breathless.

supported by his faithful apprentice. Perceiving her husband, the bourgeoise rushed in joyful transports to his arms.

"Barnabas!—my dear Barnabas! it is you", cried she; "I feared I should never see you again".

"My child! — where is my daughter?" demanded Poliveau with a distracted air.

"Married!—married by force there before my eyes!"

"And to whom?"

"To the Count de Manle, who carried her off immediately after the marriage ceremony".

The wretched father fell senseless on the pavement, with a piercing shriek.

"It is thus they have abused the confidence I placed in that old Duke de Villenègre", cried the *Lieutenant Criminel*. "He has disgracefully deceived me by declaring that he would use no other means than those of persuasion and mildness to accomplish his objects: but I shall have vengeance. Come, messieurs", continued he with energy, addressing the archers, "set out in pursuit of these wretches. The sight of this hired carriage which remained at the door, and was recognized as belonging to these ladies, caused us to forget that there were other avenues from the convent: repair the lost time, messieurs—to horse, and on the gallop follow the traces of these villains. You, Giles Poinselot, place your master in this carriage, and fetch him back to the precinct of the Temple. As for you, my dear——"

"Oh, I shall leave you no more", said the bourgeoise, throwing her arms round his neck: "with you, I have no

fears, and I wish to aid in recovering this poor Rosette. Come, messieurs", she continued, speaking to the archers in a tone of command "my husband directs you to set out at the gallop".

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning, at an hour when most of the inhabitants of the precinct of the Temple were still asleep, Poliveau and Giles Poinselot were seated mournfully in the chamber occupied by the good man. The rays of the rising sun shone through the window panes glazed with lead, and illumined the humble retreat; but neither master nor apprentice appeared aware that day had deposed night, and a smoky lamp was still burning on the table near them. The bed was untouched, for the old man had taken no repose during the cruel night which was now near its termination; and his clothes, soiled with mire, as were those of the young man, indicated the hurried journey they had been obliged to make through Paris some hours previous. Their eyes were red with grief, their complexion hectic with anxiety and want of rest. Seated a little apart, they remained in silence and wo, not venturing to offer consolation they knew to be unavailing, or to express hopes that had no real existence. They had remained for some time in this afflicted condition, when a light knocking was heard, and a panting voice asked permission to enter; Poliveau and his friend started.

"Oh! my God!—can this be my child?" cried the old man rising with feverish excitement.

But Giles, more active, bounded forward and opened the door. A lady rushed into the apartment, and throwing aside her mask, displayed the well known features of the wife of the *Lieutenant Criminel*. The poor woman had undergone her share of the anguish and fatigue of the past night; her costume was unchanged, and every thing denoted that she had enjoyed as little repose as those she came to visit. She had ascended the stairs with such haste that she could scarcely breathe; nevertheless, on beholding her, the old man exclaimed eagerly:

"Mademoiselle, have you any intelligence? Can you tell me what has become of my unfortunate daughter?"

"Alas! I know nothing of her. Not being able to control my anxiety, I have come hither with my lackey, who awaits me in the yard, and I was in hopes that you had happened to discover something".

"Ah! she is lost!—she is totally lost!" said the old man in a paroxysm of despair. "Her destroyer has hurried her far from Paris, and I shall never see her more".

"Do not so completely despair yet, Master Poliveau. It is true that de Maule has carried off your daughter in a carriage, but the city gates have been closed all night, and no vehicle permitted to go forth; orders have been given that all those which will leave during the day shall be carefully examined. My husband, who does not often display energy, has taken strong measures on this occasion. He is furious at having been duped by this stupid old Villenègre, and he has adopted some strict regulations in order to spoil their plans. He is off this morning to

the Hotel de Villenègre to hold an investigation, although the duke may be, as they say, at the point of death, and I think he will there find those who will give him some explanations. Let us still hope, Sire Poliveau, they will find your daughter, and she will be restored to you".

"Yes, but she is the wife of a miscreant, and the sight of her would be intolerable to me. Oh! the mean dogs! they would not even consent that my unhappy daughter might mate with an humble but honest man—they have given her as a wife to a vile knave, an infamous adventurer, whom I suspect not to be a gentleman even in rank. And the proud lord who has managed this abominable snare is dying, you say? Well, if the curse of an injured parent can trouble his last moments, may he be crushed beneath the weight of mine".

"Be not too severe on him, Master Poliveau", said the bourgeoise mildly. "Recollect that the old duke has repented of the transaction, and that, yielding to the remonstrances of his confessor, he had sent a countermand by one of his lackeys. Unfortunately it was too late, and the marriage was perfected".

"But his son, mademoiselle", cried the apprentice vehemently, "his son: where was he whilst they were handing over to a wretched scoundrel the woman for whom he affected such fine sentiments? Where has he hidden himself all through this dreadful night, after having brought the first intelligence of the danger? If, all through, he was not the accomplice of his father, are we not justified in thinking that he has seen, without regret, his own word violated by this act of violence and treachery?"

"I cannot allow you to attack this young man, my friend", cried the bourgeoise, in her turn, with sharpness. "Say what you please concerning the duke and duchess, his father and mother—I have no more liking for them than you have; but this dear marquis, you see, I would swear by all the saints in Paradise that he had nothing to do in this diabolical plot. It is true that he has not been seen during the night; but who can affirm that he has not urged with all his power the tardy countermand of the old duke? And, besides, I appeal to Master Poliveau himself", continued she, turning her looks towards the old man, "what were the feelings that called him elsewhere?—was it not his duty to remain beside the death-bed of his father?"

"It is true", answered Poliveau gravely; "misfortune should not make us unjust; and, although this young man has been the first cause of all my misfortunes, I would not wish to heap on him an unmerited odium. Yesterday he appeared sincere in his affection for my daughter in his despair when he found that they had carried her off; and it would afflict me greatly to discover now that he had deceived me".

The apprentice hung his head pensively: there was an interval of silence.

"Sire Poliveau", rejoined la Defunctis, "ought we to conclude that, looking to the entire matter, you calculated on impeaching the validity of the marriage by legal means? My husband says that if you do, you will have to make great interest in the case, when the duke recovers his health".

"Assuredly I shall do it, even if I have to beg in order

to obtain the funds necessary for the process. Yes, yes; I shall vindicate my despised rights; my daughter, my daughter, my only child, torn from my affections! Do you suppose I would leave my daughter to the control of an abominable husband, who would drag her with him through the mire of vice and misery? Yes; I know my duties; I shall institute a solemn process; I shall claim my daughter from the laws, the parliament, the king, if necessary. Is not the abduction manifest? The violence! has it even attempted to disguise itself, so much did they count on impunity? Are there not witnesses of the resistance of Rosette—of the efforts made by her to escape from their detestable presence—of the protests urged by her at the foot of the altar, in the presence of the unworthy husband whom they imposed on her? Instead of the infamous witnesses who have effected the carrying off of her, are there not to prove the fraud, the guilty priest who lent himself to their purpose—the attendants of the church who were present—and yourself mademoiselle, you, the wife of a magistrate—you, who have shared the griefs of Rosette, and who never quitted her unto the last moment? Yes; I am determined the process must take place; and since *Monsieur le Lieutenant Criminel* is coming here, he will receive my complaint, and of course he will do his duty".

The good lady shook her head in an embarrassed manner, at hearing the old magistrate express his intention with such firmness.

"Act in conformity with your conscience, Master Poliveau", she rejoined, "but take my advice and avoid precipitation. Justice is dear in the times we live in, and

you are not very rich; besides, she is slow, and reparation will come, if it does come, when the acquired rights of the unworthy husband of Rosette will take place of the rights which you refuse him. For your purpose, who are the witnesses whose testimony you reckon on? take care lest you find in this quarter less satisfaction than you expect; also, the convent *du Val des Ecoliers* is altogether devoted to the Duke de Villenègre; and when men of their calling—saving their reverences—allow themselves to lapse into improprieties, they become far worse than the fellows of the *Cour des Miracles*. As for me", she added, with some embarrassment, "in truth, I cannot say much. What has passed this night is to me like the recollection of some hideous nightmare, and I was so affrighted that I could hardly affirm if Rosette answered yes or no, when they demanded if she would take the Count de Manle for her husband".

Poliveau regarded her with a look of disdain.

"And why, mademoiselle, did your terror reach to such a pitch, when you must have known well that you were not the object of their pursuit?"

"Eh! who can tell? I would wish to see you side by side with a man whose trade is assassination, like the Captain Cutthroat, who is the personal enemy of my husband, and who, at each movement I made, clutched the handle of a blade an ell in length! I assure you, gossip, there was enough there to discompose and terrify; besides, they had the church as dark as a vault".

"Bourgeois", said Giles Poinselot, with an ironical smile, "do you not perceive that Mademoiselle Defunctis wishes to draw her stake from the play, in order to avoid

vexing her husband, who is the mere tool of the Villenègres".

This accusation flushed the lady's countenance.

"Hold your tongue, friend, hold your tongue!" she cried, rising up with indignation. "Learn, miserable shop drudge, that M. Defunctis, all powerful as he is, has never intimidated me, and that I know perfectly well how to play my part when I have taken a fancy into my head; but", continued the dame in a softer tone, "I forget that you are a poor unsuccessful lover, and that grief has impaired your reason. Come, let us not fret", she continued, in the same subdued tone; "and to revert to what I told you, I declare that the more I reflect on the conduct of Rosette, the more whimsical and unaccountable it appears".

"How, mademoiselle! was not my daughter actually dragged to the foot of the altar, and did she not strongly protest against the violence manifested towards her?"

"If you term it to protest, to say aloud that she was refused the exercise of her free will, without doubt she has protested, the poor little creature; and she addressed to that hypocritical *custodi-nos* some touching and well turned expressions; but then, on my faith! it seemed to me that she resigned herself rather quietly to her lot—she neither cried out nor wept, so that I thought at the moment, she had been enthralled by some magic spell; in a word, it may be quite possible that the little girl has ended by consenting to this marriage, and if you attack the validity of it, she will perhaps be opposed to you".

"It cannot be!" cried Poliveau with impetuosity: "Rosette could not have consented to unite her lot to that

of such a worthless wretch as this de Manle. If they had proposed for her husband any other man, whose vices and baseness she was ignorant of, I might possibly believe that she was actuated by sudden caprice, or some unaccountable quick transition of sentiment; but, of her own free will to wed the robber who had plundered her father's warehouse, and who was on the point of going to the galleys for it, is absurd, incredible, impossible".

"Hear me, good man. I have long since foreseen that Rosette, say what you may, had no great relish for a convent, and for my part, I avow that before I would pass my days behind the grate of a convent, I would consent to marry even the fellow with the long poinard—I know no worse fate".

The old man mused a few moments with an angry countenance.

"Can it be true", he resumed at last, "that this unhappy creature has preferred this horrible union to the pious retreat which she had already chosen herself? Can she have deceived me? Were her tears feigned? But if it was so, I ought to renounce and curse her; I ought——"

"Silence!" interrupted la Defunctis rising up, "a carriage is stopping before this house; they are coming up. Undoubtedly it is my husband, and perhaps we shall have some key to these mysteries".

A great noise was heard through the house, but if it betokened the arrival of the *Lieutenant Criminel* of the Short Robe, it would appear that he had a numerous attendance; for they remarked that a number of voices

were heard of persons ascending the staircase. This sudden tumult in the quiet and retired house appeared to augur no good to Poliveau. His spirit, crushed by such recent afflictions, anticipated nothing but evil; he became pale, and unable to rise. La Defunctis and the apprentice surveyed him with dismay.

All at once the door opened, and a lackey clothed in magnificent livery entered the apartment; he bowed low before the good man, and said, with the most profound respect:

"The Duke and the Duchess de Villenègre demand of the worshipful Monsieur de Poliveau permission to present themselves before him".

This new wonder—this coming in the midst of the sorrowful feelings which preoccupied the persons present, struck them with surprise.

"What means this cruel pleasantry?" cried Poliveau, at length. "The Duke and Duchess de Villenègre here, in this poor dwelling? But the duke is dying, they say, and the duchess——"

"Stay, Master Poliveau", interrupted la Defunctis, looking earnestly at the lackey, who cast down his eyes, "I recollect this knave; it is the same who carried us off last night by the orders of his master; it was he who commanded the ruffians by whom——"

Before she could finish the expression, Mignon stepped briskly aside to make way for some persons who had followed him, and announced in a loud voice:

"The Duke and the Duchess de Villenègre".

At the same moment the young Villenègre appeared leading by the hand a lady, masked and labouring under

evident emotion. After them came the *Lieutenant Criminel* Defunctis, in court dress, and a venerable ecclesiastic, who appeared to be the almoner of some illustrious family. Behind, upon the lobby and stairs, there were a dozen lackeys and pages in splendid dresses, who observed a respectful silence.

Poliveau supposed himself the object of some hallucination, and remained motionless, whilst Villenègre and the lady he conducted advanced towards him. Meanwhile, he uttered with difficulty:

"What!—is it you, M. le Marquis? They have announced that——"

"There is no other Duke de Villenègre but myself", replied the young gentleman with a grave and downcast aspect. "My father is no more, and I come to perform his last wishes in imploring your forgiveness for the evil he meditated against you".

This thought revived all the old man's wrath.

"My pardon!" cried he—"my pardon to him who has carried off my daughter, and——"

The other interrupted him by a gesture of entreaty.

"I see", said he with a sigh, "that I have not yet in your eyes any right to ask this favour; I leave, then, this task to the Duchess de Villenègre, whose voice can, better than mine, reach your heart".

At the same time he presented the lady who accompanied him, whose heaving bosom betrayed its internal agitation.

"I must first obtain pardon for myself", she cried, sobbing and throwing herself to the knees of the old man.

She quickly tore off her mask, and then might be recognized in the Duchess de Villenègre, *La Belle Drapière*, Rosette Poliveau. The old man's first movement was to raise and clasp her to his heart.

"My daughter!—my well beloved child! you are at last restored", he cried, as he wept over her. "But whence come you?—what have you done?—what has come to pass? Good God! I believe I am dreaming, and I fear I am losing my reason! Where is the wretch to whom they betrayed you? How have you escaped him?"

Rosette made no reply, but pointed to the new Duke de Villenègre, and threw herself sobbing into the arms of her father.

"Rosette has no other husband than me", rejoined the young man respectfully; "and we come to ask your sanction to a marriage which has already received the consecrated sanction of the church".

"Can it be possible?—I cannot comprehend. My God, grant that I may not become insane!" said Poliveau wildly.

"A word or two will suffice to explain this mystery", rejoined the duke, lowering his voice to escape being heard by the lackeys, who had remained at the door of the chamber. "Yesterday evening being at a loss how to avert the dangers which threatened your daughter, and of which I had casually discovered the secret, I returned to the spot where I had left de Manle dead drunk, and sleeping, hoping to obtain from him some new traces. It was then I determined to pass myself for him, and to act according to circumstances, to the end that I might rescue

Mademoiselle Poliveau from the power of my father's agents. I knew the password by which de Manle was to be recognized by the emissary of Captain Corbineau, and I was aware of the place and hour of rendezvous. I took from him his hat, peruke, and cloak, and hoped that, favoured by the darkness, and by imitating, as well as I could, the accent now in vogue amongst certain courtiers, I might be able, for a short time at least, to deceive the persons who were carrying off Rosette. All succeeded; the emissary mistook me for the person he was seeking, and conducted me to the Church of Saint Catherine. There I had to exert all my efforts to sustain my assumed character; but, to my shame perhaps, I had too much frequented the company of the Count de Manle to be unacquainted with his jargon and peculiarities; and, moreover, the darkness, my feigned intoxication, and, without doubt, the preoccupation of our enemies, favoured me so, that I managed the matter without exciting any suspicion. You can divine the rest. The marriage took place without any person knowing who I was, except Rosette, to whom I discovered myself just at the altar foot. My first thought was to reconduct her to the Convent of *l'Ave Maria*, until I might be able to claim her as my wife; but, on being apprised that my father had felt remorse, I changed my intention, and, taking advantage of a carriage which had been prepared for her, I boldly brought her to the hotel de Villenègre. There I made my father's confessor, the estimable ecclesiastic whom you see here, acquainted with all that had passed, and how the stratagems of the Duke de Villenègre to baffle my secret designs had only served to hasten their execution, and I

had the good fortune to interest him in my favour. At once he sought my father, represented how odious the transaction had been, and pressed him to sanction our union. The dying man at last allowed himself to be swayed: M. le *Lieutenant Criminel* and this excellent priest can give you their testimony as to the touching scene at which they were present. You see, monsieur, it is for you to adopt me for your son—as the Duke de Villenègre had adopted Rosette as his daughter—and I implore this favour with clasped hands and bended knees".

"In my arms, my son, and you my daughter—in my arms both of you!" cried Poliveau, raising his eyes towards Heaven.

For a moment they were clasped in a three-fold embrace, during which la Defunctis, who was hanging on the arm of her husband, and was bewildered by his questions, cried with a loud voice:

"How, was it M. le Marquis—M. le Duc, I should say—who so well counterfeited this drunken schemer? but why did he not discover himself to me? I would have had much more courage then in dealing with that ferocious ruffian, Corbineau, and that wretched hypocrite of a *custodi-nos*".

A hand was gently laid upon her arm.

"My daughter", said the ecclesiastic, with a low voice, but in an impressive tone, "the young Duke de Villenègre had perhaps reason to fear your levity in so critical a moment. I see the proof of it in your want of charity in speaking of a guilty man who dishonours the holy character with which he is invested; never forget, my daughter, that we should throw the cloak of silence over whatever is the subject of scandal. Let me beseech you,

then, as a Christian, to observe a secrecy respecting this sacrilege, of which you were last night a witness".

"My dear father", rejoined the duke in a high tone, "the carriages await us below, and you must leave this poor and humble dwelling: henceforth you will reside with us at the hotel de Villenègre. We must take a journey into the country to see madame, the duchess, my mother, whose unhappy state claims our regard and pity; but, you quit us no more; Rosette and I will exert ourselves to the utmost to cause you to forget the sorrows we have occasioned you".

A melancholy expression overspread the old man's countenance.

"Have you considered well, M. le Duc, of this matter?" he asked in a low voice. "Do you not apprehend the railleries of the city and the court, in keeping with you an old trader, whose city habits will make you blush when too late? Do you not fear that your noble relatives——"

"I am henceforth the head of my family", said Villenègre with dignity, "and I shall know how to make my rights respected; moreover, who can complain? Are not you also noble, in rendering important services to the state? in filling at your own charge the office of magistrate of the city of Paris, have you not acquired an heraldic shield as honourable and pure as that of the highest lords? It is the only nobility which can be irresistibly vindicated, and I cannot take on myself to assert that the rank of all the gentlemen who frequent the court has an equally creditable origin".

The delicacy and generosity of these sentiments overwhelmed the old man with emotion.

"Pardon me, my son", he said affectionately, "I have misunderstood you".

"This is not all", rejoined the young duke, fixing his looks upon Giles Poinselot, who had remained gloomy and silent in a corner, "you have found in your adversity—to which I contributed too much—a generous friend, a faithful servant, who ought to participate in your good fortune, as he has shared in your reverses".

"I wish for nothing—I want nothing!" said the apprentice quickly.

Villenègre advanced towards him and took his hand with youthful frankness.

"I know from what your repugnance to accept anything from me arises", said he in a low voice and kindly tone; "can you bear me ill-will, Master Giles, for being more fortunate than you, and for having performed my duty in giving to Rosette the reparation that was her due? You have often showed me a little ill-will, and nevertheless I have never done you any wrong or injury: spite of all your affronts to me, I still offer you my friendship: will you accept it?"

The apprentice could not but be touched by this language, so widely differing from the insolence with which gentlemen at that time addressed persons of his rank. He raised the duke's hand to his lips, and replied in an altered manner:

"Monsieur, the happiness you are about to enjoy is well deserved".

"Well, then", replied Villenègre, so as to be heard by all those present, "the matter is settled; you will take charge, M. Giles, of all your old master's commercial

affairs—you will discharge his debts and reëstablish his name. My steward will furnish you the necessary funds, for the old warehouse of the Grand Saint Martin must be better stocked than ever with wares of every kind. M. Poliveau will resign to you the proprietorship; you can follow the useful avocation which he has been an honour to: may you be more fortunate".

Poinselot was so affected with all this kindness, that he was incapable of reply.

"He is worthy of your favour, M. le Duc", cried Poliveau joyfully, pointing to the apprentice, "and a better man could not be chosen to revive the prosperity of my establishment. Giles, you will succeed—I say it; and I shall sometimes betake myself to the old warehouse, of which you are henceforth the master, to afford you the advantage of my experience. You will form a connection with poor Guillaume, who was so much attached to you, and I shall weep with joy at seeing your good fortune".

Meanwhile Villenègre turned to Rosette, and imprinting a kiss on her brow, said:

"Well, madame, are you satisfied?"

"You are full of goodness and generosity, M. le Duc", she answered, her eyes filling with tears of pleasure.

La Defunctis, on her part, enchanted with all she saw and heard, cried out impetuously, spite of all her husband's attempts to restrain her:

"That is what I call a real gentleman! Yes, and you, dear Rosette, will be a worthy and proper duchess: you will not be the person to scorn an humble bourgeoise like me. Besides, I shall often go to see you, and all my

neighbours shall die of envy. Heavens! how happy I am!"

The young duke interrupted la Defunctis by gravely remarking:

"We must remember that this day cannot be given to gaiety, and that pious duties remain to be fulfilled. We must return to the hotel de Villenègre, and let us join our prayers for his soul who consented to my happiness without being able to witness it".

These words calmed the assembly, and they set about their departure. A few moments after, three carriages, well appointed with footmen, and outriders on prancing steeds, traversed the precinct of the Temple with as much rapidity as could be imparted to the heavy vehicles of the period. Although the hour was early, the noise and splendour of these equipages had attracted to windows and doors the inhabitants of this poor quarter, unaccustomed to such visits. But, on arriving at the place adjoining the principal entrance, the cortege, notwithstanding the mettle of the horses, the plying of the whips, and the oaths of the coachmen, was obliged to relax its progress. A numerous mob occupied this place, and such was the interest of the spectacle which occupied their attention, that the ragganuffins composing it took no heed to their safety, and would have been injured under the carriage wheels but for the precaution with which they were driven.

Those in the carriages took advantage of the slow movement to examine the cause of this extraordinary gathering. At first such was the tumult and agitation, that they scarcely knew on which side to direct their

attention; at last they perceived a man without peruke or hat, with his doublet torn and begrimed with mud, trying to make himself heard in the midst of the mob that overwhelmed him with hootings. It might be supposed that he was one of those poor fools whom the populace so cruelly worry, when their insanity exhibits any peculiarity of a ridiculous nature. There were such bursts of laughter around the luckless wight that it deafened the bystanders.

"It is Angoulevent, the prince of blockheads", cried one fellow, sneering; "no other but he could play such ridiculous pranks".

"It is Master Guillaume, the late king's jester", said another; "the whip, the whip, for this insolent dog!"

The poor wretch vainly struggled to disengage himself from this mob, hoarsely bawling to them to listen to reason, and, at the same time, assuming airs of importance ill suited to his sorry plight. They dragged him by his garments, and when he resisted, he received slaps on the head from every direction. The archers on guard at the gate of the precinct looked on, laughing like the rest, and without a thought of assisting the wretch who was treated so cruelly. At last he turned his face, swollen with rage, in the direction of the carriages, and for an instant his voice surmounted the uproar of the crowd:

"I defy you all, brutes, rascals, cursed scoundrels as ye are", he cried with enraged tone. "Is it any reason for insulting a brave gentleman because he has fallen into the hands, last night, of more than thirty robbers and thieves, who have plundered him? If there is amongst you even

one gentleman, let him appear, and come out on the grass with me—he shall see whether I am a brave man".

The sound of his voice, even more than his pitiful appearance, caused him to be recognized. The duke ordered the carriage to be stopped.

"It is the vile Count de Manle", cried he with disgust, "without doubt they have found him asleep in the state in which I left him last night, and he has attracted this entire kennel of vagabonds about him by his usual insolence".

"Well, what do you wish to do, M. le Duc?" said Defunctis, who was in the same carriage, on seeing Villenègre rising.

"Whatever may be the offences of this person, I cannot forget that he is a gentleman, and that it has been by me he has been brought into his present situation".

"Consider well, monseigneur", said the *Lieutenant Criminel*, "would you compromise yourself for such a wretch, when two of your people can suffice to deliver him? As for his quality of gentleman, set your mind at rest. This fellow, who calls himself the 'Count de Manle', has no right to the name or title, and of that I have acquired proof positive. He is an old journeyman barber, named Jacques Fouilleret, well known in the town of Manle for his knaveries, and who some time since made Italy the theatre of his exploits in swindling a number of gentlemen".

The Duke de Villenègre blushed at the recollection of the terms, almost of intimacy, which he had maintained with this vile schemer, whilst detaching his purse, which

was suspended to his girdle, according to the fashion of the period, he handed it to a page, who, hat in hand, awaited his orders at the coach door:

"Give that to the Count de Manle", said he, "and tell him that this money is sent on the part of him who stripped him last night".

"And at the same time inform Jacques Fouilleret", continued Defunctis bitterly, "that if I find him in Paris, in the quarter of my jurisdiction, I shall send him to the pillory, as I calculate on sending to the gallows, in three days, his worthy friend, the Captain Cutthroat, whom the sergeant of the guard seized this morning, at the moment the ruffian came to prowl about the hotel de Villenègre".

Some grooms advanced to execute the order of their master. De Manle, or rather Jacques Fouilleret, pocketed the purse, and directed his eyes towards the carriages. He perceived Villenègre, Rosette, Poliveau, and Defunctis, and with imperturbable impudence he was about to advance and try the effect of some new fabrication, when the carriages were set in motion, and the wretch was abandoned to the insulting mockery of the crowd.

THE END.

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